FIRST THINGS

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Alyssa Lyra Pitstick / Edward Oakes

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The Public Square

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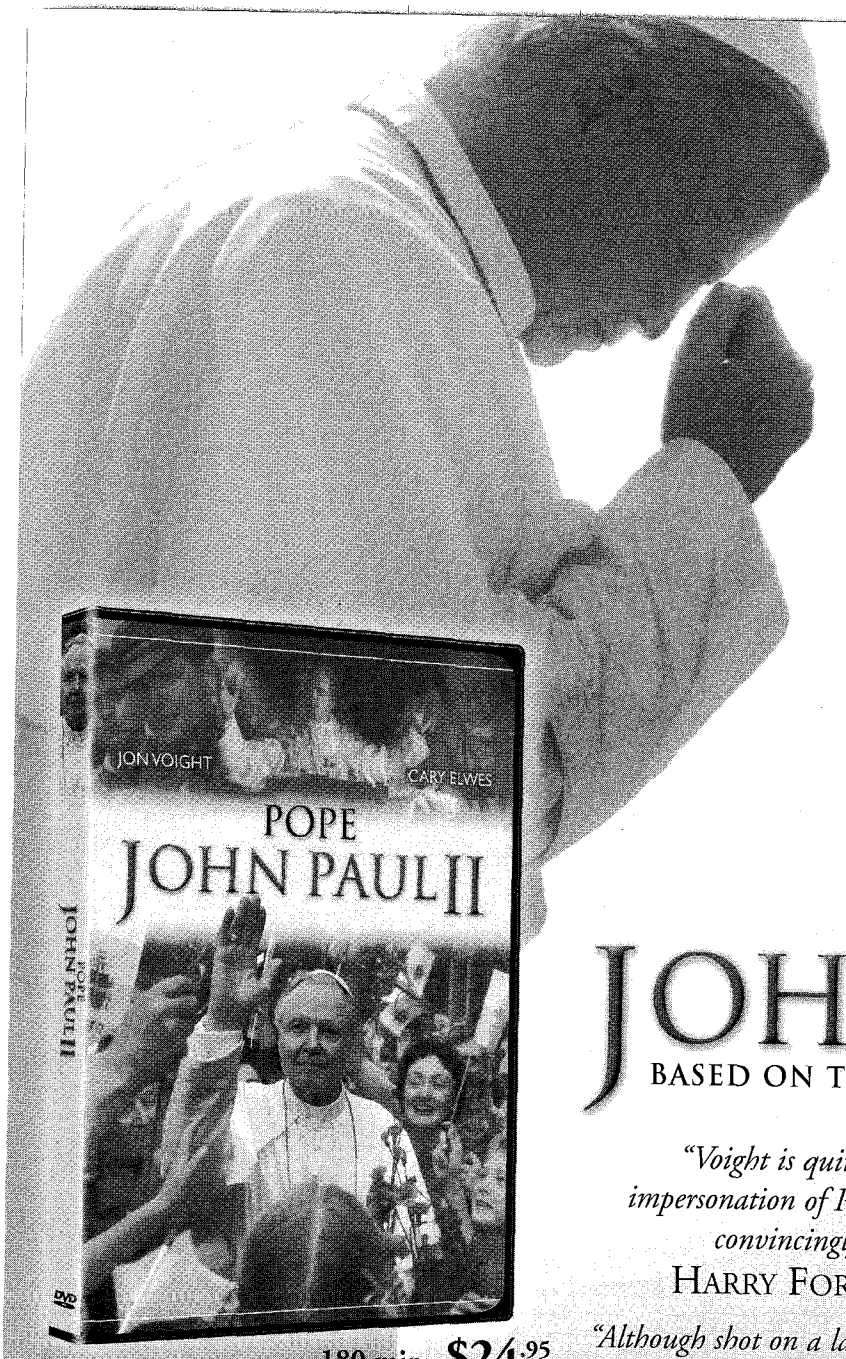

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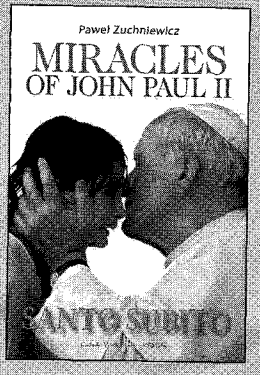

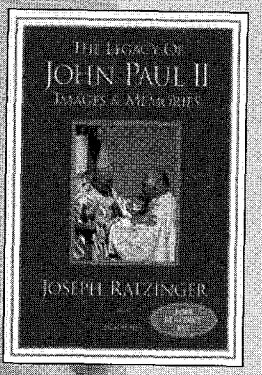

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Scoured or Skimmed?

Alan Jacobs claims to have "scoured" the pages of *Shadowplay* in a vain search for answers to its anomalies ("The Code Breakers," August/September). *Skimmed* would be a more accurate word. Objecting to my suggestion that *Merchant of Venice* contains an invitation to the Queen to identify with the figure of Portia, he makes the point that Elizabeth remained single, whereas Portia marries.

Had he taken the trouble to read on, however, he would have learned that, in Elizabeth's own terms, she did marry. Pressed by Parliament to choose a husband, she announced: "'I am already bound unto an husband, which is the kingdom of England, and that may suffice you . . . and so reproach me no more' quoth she."

Shadowplay highlights the wealth of contemporary allusion surrounding Portia's espousal to Bassanio, designed to remind the Queen of her allegorical flirtation with England—and before Jacobs ridicules the idea of a lost level of meaning in which Bassanio represents Elizabeth's subjects, a reviewer who professes to respect the "various forms and genres and techniques of literary writing" will be aware that poems and plays in the mid-sixteenth century regularly celebrated England's courtship of the monarch, and that literary characters representing England were commonplace, though disguised in order to subvert the ban on discussing contemporary politics and religion.

The latest piece of research into the neglected area of covert political literature in early modern England, Greg Walker's impressive *Writing Under Tyranny,* identifies the moment in 1534 when the humanist genre of "counsel to princes" was forced to adopt coded terms which, in my view, reached their most sophisticated form in the repressive 1590s.

There is no reason why Jacobs should not lampoon a book after a brief glance rather than dignifying it with a review, but it is a bit much to accompany the caricature with advice to the author on the virtues of close reading.

Clare Asquith
Mells, Somerset, England

Alan Jacobs replies:

I would encourage Clare Asquith to consider that there are *several* possible reasons why, in a brief essay that dealt with several books, I might not have noted a germane point about hers. For instance, I might have read her book quite carefully and nevertheless, in an attempt to survey a great deal of material, failed to note something significant—and in this case that is just what happened. (In other words, I am diligent-though-intellectually-limited rather than smart-yet-careless.)

The point is indeed relevant, though I think it weakens Asquith's case rather than strengthens it. For, in the story Elizabeth tells, she was married to England at the moment of her accession, before any of her foreign suitors appeared, and this renders any substantive comparison to Portia's choice among the three caskets difficult at best. (In the rest of her letter, Asquith simply reasserts her key claims without responding to the questions about evidence-handling that I and several other commentators have raised.)

But again, Asquith is absolutely right that I should have acknowledged her treatment of Elizabeth's matrimonial rhetoric.

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Lincoln Agonistes

James Nuechterlein's review ("Lincoln Both Great and Good," August/September) of three recent books on Abraham Lincoln, arguably our greatest president, was excellent and on the mark except for one significant point. He writes, "Lincoln was a great admirer of the Jefferson who wrote the Declaration of Independence, but he had little patience for the Jeffersonian dream of America as a land of self-sufficient farmers."

In fact, Lincoln had difficulty with the aristocratic Jefferson on many accounts, and in private he not only scorned Jefferson's views of the ideal yeoman farmer but also condemned Jefferson's hypocrisy regarding slaves, a hypocrisy that implied Jefferson's use of the word *equality* in the Declaration need not be taken literally as applying to all men. To Jefferson, the self-evident truth of equality was an unearned gift of the Creator to the nation's citizens that must be respected but that need not apply to slaves in bondage or to native savages.

Of course, our Founding Fathers argued over many things, but they especially disagreed on Jefferson's meaning of *equality* as used in the Declaration. Following a period of "four-score and seven," it took more than 600,000 deaths on the battlefield to straighten out the accepted definition. Lincoln, following the great battle at Gettysburg, powerfully delivered the final word, emphasizing that equality was actually a proposition established primarily by enormous sacrifice.

That the concept of equality is a proposition implies that it is not self-evident, one of the properties of the truths in Jefferson's Declaration. Moreover, Jefferson's truths come to humanity unearned from a Creator. (Jefferson originally had used the word *sacred* for these truths, but Franklin convinced him to use the less religious term *self-evident.*) Lincoln's *equality*, on the other hand, was a hypothesis, one that if proven would be a significant corrective to the accepted meaning of the Declaration. This proposition of equality, based on the full strength of reason from the Enlightenment, was one that must be fought for and defended passionately with all the strength and wit one can muster in life.

Simply put: If you win equality, then freedom results (and not the other way around). In the West, our modern consumer society has now debased this concept to be the equality to buy and consume, to trade and to travel, to build up a life of toys and trinkets. But this does not diminish the original Enlightenment vision of Lincoln, one that significantly and permanently changed the meaning and impact of one of Jefferson's self-evident truths. If "all men are created equal," then Lincoln believed they were expected to earn that status, and the resulting freedom, in the eyes of Providence.

Daniel J. Biezad
San Luis Obispo, California

James Nuechterlein's medley of reviews of the three new Lincoln studies is particularly artful in weaving together so much that we have come to know about the mature Lincoln who led the Union through the war years, as well as pointing out those areas in which Lincoln will perhaps always be clothed in mystery or contradiction.

Of particular importance in this regard, though little noted by historians or popular piety, are Nuechterlein's telling observations on the Lincoln who prosecuted the war through to its conclusion despite its frightful costs—whatever the popular and, in some sense, real perception of Lincoln as tenderhearted.

It is perhaps well to remember that this Lincoln, who Nuechterlein reminds us mused over the implications of the awful arithmetic of Fredericksburg, was, before his apotheosis, hated by many in the North precisely for it and was known by many there as "the widow-maker." Perhaps more to the point was his willingness to unleash relentless warfare on his secessionist opponents, who were, in Lincoln's view, still fellow Americans, even if in rebellion. This is the president who late in the war pressed his munitions officers toward the creation of an ever more efficient repeating carbine to be used against rifle-carrying CS troops, and, more tellingly, the president who let loose Sherman on Georgia, Sheridan on the Shenandoah, and ratified the long contest and carnage of Grant's 1864 summer campaign.

History has chosen to deal kindly with this warrior and to consider his motives—saving the Union and ending slavery—apt justification for these grinding costs. It has also chosen to remember the Second Inaugural's "with malice toward none, with charity for all" as opposed to overmuch remembrance of the near-total war that made possible those healing words.

An interesting aside, not strictly related to either the studies reviewed or Nuechterlein's piece itself, is whether we can see Lincoln's conduct of the war as inaugurating a whole new U.S. doctrine of war, a doctrine that saw maturation in Wilson's conduct of World War I and that come to fruition in Roosevelt's and Truman's conduct of the total war that was World War II, a doctrine that finds in a civilian population's will to resist almost as legitimate a target as its military's ability.

All of which is not to say that the war doctrine the United States adopted in World War II was anything other than justified given the frightful daily cost in Allied manpower, just that it had its first American notes in the Lincolnian conduct of the Civil War.

Philip M. Niblack
Manchester, Missouri

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Dylan Lives

Stephen H. Webb is right to debunk "the myth of Dylan as a man on the political and cultural left" ("It Ain't Me, Babe," August/September). Webb could have confirmed his thesis, which he largely bases on Dylan's interviews, with *Chronicles: Volume One*, Dylan's autobiography. There he says, "I really was never any more than what I was—a folk musician." And by that he means a composer of folk tunes. "I was not a spokesman for anything or anybody . . . I was only a musician." In his songs, the "triplet forms would fashion melodies at intervals. This is what would drive the song—not necessarily the lyrical content."

Dylan clearly cares about musical sounds. So he writes, "Whatever the counterculture was, I'd seen enough of it. I was sick of the way my lyrics had been extrapolated, their meanings subverted into polemics and that I had been anointed as the Big Bubba of Rebellion, High Priest of Protest, the Czar of Dissent, the Duke of Disobedience, Leader of the Freeloaders, Kaiser of Apostasy, Archbishop of Anarchy, the Big Cheese." No wonder he admits toward the end of these memoirs, "My favorite politician was Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater."

Dylan says one of his most important songs musically is "Man in the Long Black Coat," off the 1989 album *Oh Mercy*. "In some kind of weird way," he writes, "I thought of it as my 'I Walk the Line,' a song I'd always considered to be up there at the top, one of the most mysterious and revolutionary of all time, a song that makes an attack on your most vulnerable spots. . . . Johnny Cash didn't have a piercing yell, but ten thousand years of culture fell from him. He could have been a cave dweller. He sounds like he's at the edge of a fire, or in the deep snow, or in a ghostly forest, the coolness of conscious obvious strength, full tilt and vibrant with danger. 'I keep a close watch on this heart of mine.' Indeed. I must have recited those lines to myself a million times. Johnny's voice was so big, it made the world grow small, unusually low pitched—dark and booming, and he had the right band to match, the rippling rhythm and cadence of click-clack. Words that were the rule of law and backed by the power of God."

Rev. Ronald F. Marshall
First Lutheran Church
of West Seattle
Seattle, Washington

Stephen H. Webb replies:

I couldn't agree more—there's so much that could still be said, which is why I've written *Dylan Redeemed: From Highway 61 to Saved* (Continuum, 2006). Your letter gives me hope that Dylan fans are ready for a new interpretation of his music.

Ars Poetica

May I respectfully call attention to a misquotation in your otherwise admirable "While We're at It" in the August/September issue? What Hilaire Belloc actually wrote (originally in *The Path to Rome*, page 106 of the Doubleday-Image ed., 1956, later found in his collected poems, a copy of which I do not have at hand) was this:

But Catholic men that live
upon wine
Are deep in the water, and
frank, and fine;
Wherever I travel I find it so,
Benedicamus Domino.

I have no idea where the version you cite came from, though I have come across it before.

Patricia M. Godfrey
Hasbrouck Heights, New Jersey

RJN replies:

I, too, have seen that version, plus another that combines the two. Perhaps a learned reader can clarify the matter?

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Opinion

Miniatures, 1996–99

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

In Twilight

I well remember the very widespread custom, back in the South, of "twilighting." Carried over from before the Revolution, it might have also been fortified by the meager, perilous years of the Civil War. Yet this practice had come about much earlier. Was it born of the months-long warmness of the Southern dusk? Many became accustomed never to rush lighting their lamps, yet, having completed their chores (or tended to the livestock) before nightfall, they were in no hurry to get to bed. Instead, they emerged outside to sit on dirt ledges or benches, or just lounged inside with the windows wide open—no light to draw in bugs. One after another they would sit softly down, as if lost in thought. And long remained silent.

If someone did speak, it was quietly, delicately, unobtrusively. Somehow, in those exchanges, no one got fired up to argue, or to reproach spitefully, or to quarrel. Faces could barely be made out, then not at all; and, lo, one began to discern in them, and their voices, something unfamiliar, something one failed to observe through the prior course of years.

A feeling would take hold of everyone, of something impalpable and unseen that descended gently from the dimming after-sunset sky, dissolved in the air, streamed in through the windows: that profound seriousness of life, its unfragmented meaning, that goes ignored in the bustle of day. Our brush with the enigma that we let flit away.

Rooster Song

With the depopulation, abandonment, and extinction of our villages, we have forgotten, and younger generations have never even heard, the many-voiced rooster roll call of midday. In sunny summertime, from one yard to the next, across the street, and farther, beyond the village outskirts, how marvelous is this chorus of triumphant life.

Little else can bestow such tranquility upon the soul. Not drowned out by any noisy bustle, this vivid, vibrant, succulent, stalwart cry conveys to us that throughout these parts there reigns a blessed peace, an untroubled calm. That's how today has unfolded so far, and why shouldn't it continue? Carry on, everyone, your benign pursuits.

Right here, somewhere, he saunters about proudly, all white and orange, with his sumptuous, knightly scarlet comb.

Comports himself gloomlessly.

If only *we* could.

Nocturnal Thoughts

It's one thing in a labor camp: You break your back the livelong day and, just you lay your head on a straw pillow, you hear: "U-u-u-up you get!" No nocturnal thoughts here.

But in the merry-go-round of our modern life, so frayed and fragmented, thoughts have no chance to ripen and settle during the day, and are abandoned. It is at night that they return to claim their due. No sooner does your mind's fog begin to lift, they lunge, they flood your flattened consciousness, jostling with each other. And one of the more caustic and audacious of the lot coils in front, ready to sting.

But your resistance, your dignity—is not to give yourself up to these gusts, but to master the dark torrent and guide it toward that which heals. For there is always a thought, often more than one, that introduces a tiny element of tranquility, like those control rods inserted into a nuclear reactor to impede a meltdown. Just learn to find this element, this saving ray of God—or even have it on the ready—and hold on to it.

Then your soul and reason are cleansed, those gusts disperse, and into the troubled world of insomnia step beneficent, spacious thoughts—ones you could never have approached in the bustle of day.

And thank insomnia: From this lookout even the insoluble can be solved. Power over self.

Remembrance of the Departed

It is an act bequeathed to us in deep wisdom, by men of holiness.

We come to understand its purpose not in vigorous youth, amidst the company of loved ones, family, friends; but with age.

Parents have passed; peers now pass as well. Where

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go they? It seems unguessable, unfathomable, beyond our grasp. Yet as with some foreordained clarity, it dawns for us, it glimmers—no, they have not vanished.

And no more shall we learn of it, while we live. But a prayer for their souls—it casts from us to them, from them to us, an impalpable arch of measureless breadth yet effortless proximity. Why, here they are, you can almost touch them. Both unknowable are they and, as ever, so familiar. Except, they have fallen back in years: Some were older than we, but now are younger.

Focusing, you even *inhale* their answer, their hesitation, their warning. In exchange, you send them your own earthly warmth: Perhaps we too can help somehow? And a promise: We shall meet.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1970. His works include The Gulag Archipelago *and* One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich. *These "Miniatures," previously unpublished in English, were translated by Ignat and Stephan Solzhenitsyn for* The Solzhenitsyn Reader *(ISI Books), a new volume edited by Edward E. Ericson Jr. and Daniel J. Mahoney.*

Christmas in New York

Joseph Bottum

There was a woman screaming on Park Avenue, flecks of saliva spraying from her mouth as she raged into her cell phone, "It's not my fault." Over and over, like the high-pitched squeal of a power saw cutting bricks: *It's not my fault* and a run of foul names, *It's not my fault* and another run of names, *It's not my fault, you (blank)ing (blank). It's not my fault, you evil (blank). It's . . . not . . . my . . . fault.*

I don't know, maybe, whatever it was, it really wasn't her fault. But her cell phone and makeup, her dark purse and blue coat, her warm leather gloves—the accoutrements of sanity around that face of public madness—made her seem guilty, somehow. Guilty of *something*, down to the bone. The man at the Salvation Army kettle kept his tense back turned against her as he rang his Christmas bell. The crowds of passing strangers fixed their eyes at uncomfortable angles and hurried by. A child stared anxiously till his mother began chattering about breakfast, overbright and overloud as she tugged him around the corner.

I saw the screaming woman for a moment framed by the giant candy canes and white Christmas garlands soaped on the window of the storefront behind her. Then the traffic light changed, and I crossed the street, my shoulders hunched in self-protection. *It's not my fault, you evil (blank). It's . . . not . . . my . . . fault.*

Is twice a warning or only a coincidence? For I heard the phrase again that same day in the vestibule of the bank after work. New York is still one of the world's great Christmas towns. Too dirty for too long to clean up well just for the holidays, Manhattan still makes a brave show for the season. The shop-window mannequins sport their Christmas finery, and the railings on the apartment buildings don their strings of lights and tinsel. Maybe movies—from *Miracle on 34th Street* on down—are what have made New York's Christmases seem so iconic: the ice skating at Rockefeller Center, the skimpy elf costumes on the strutting Rockettes at Radio City, the sleigh bells on the horse cabs, the piles of toys at FAO Schwarz, the window displays at Lord & Taylor. But at least, as a result, New York still tries. There in the bank, while I waited in line for an automatic-teller machine, I watched the city's shoppers hurrying past, their arms full of Christmas packages, and listened to a man talking loudly on his cell phone, one foot up on the window sill.

"It's not my fault," he explained in a confident boom. "I'm just the kind of person who has to keep after things." What is it about self-justification that always makes it seem so false? About that phrase "I'm the kind of person" that always makes it sound like the beginning of a lie? He was well dressed in loafers and slacks, a nice overcoat, and seemingly indifferent to the fact that the people at the ATMs could overhear him. With the effortless patter of a story told many times before—with the sort of smooth charm, in fact, that fails because it announces too openly just how charming it is trying to be—he launched into a long tale about how he didn't really want to sue, but then he was the kind of person who needed to see that he got his rights, and it wasn't his fault everything got so messed up.

It's not my fault—the cry we've made every day since Adam took the apple. Down somewhere in the belly, there's an awareness of just how wrong the world is, how fallen and broken and incomplete. This is the guilty knowledge, the failure of innocence, against which we snarl and rage: That's just the way things are; there's nothing I can do; I wasn't the one who started the fight; it's not my fault. What would genuine innocence look like if it ever came into the world? I know the answer my faith calls me to believe: like a child born in a cattle shed. But to understand why that is an answer, to see it clearly, we are also compelled

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to know our guilt for the world, to feel it all the way to the bottom.

I sometimes wonder to whom all the city's cell-phone talkers are speaking. People all around them, thousands and thousands: *there*, that angry balding man slamming past in his stained parka, and *there*, that coatless woman with the deliberately unfocused stare smokers wear as they stand with their arms crossed outside restaurants, and *there*, that tired-looking girl in the sweater trying to stop a taxi, and *there*, and *there*, and *there*—an endless stream of presence, and still they shout or murmur on the street, pouring secrets and imprecations into their clenched phones and throat microphones. Talking to the ones who aren't there. Communing with the absent, like fortune-tellers with a crystal ball. Like mediums calling the dead.

Sometimes New York hints at something different. There is a strange impression the city gives after a snowstorm—a kind of epiphanic feeling, a sense of being taken for a moment out of time. People walk in the middle of the streets. A few pull out their skis and slalom down First Avenue. The taxis all disappear, and for a moment the whitewashed city looks clean and small-townish.

But New York cannot play for long at being the New Jerusalem. The ultimate time-bound place, it cannot step outside the rush and rattle of commerce. The supreme City of Man, it cannot pose as the City of God. With their town bright and almost pretty, New Yorkers act for a few moments as though things have changed—or rather, as though these few moments don't count, as though the apocalypse of falling snow has lifted them out of time and the storm had left them for an instant clean and unhurried. Last winter, I saw an old-fashioned toboggan—ten or twelve feet long, the wooden slats curling to a two-foot swoosh in front—being drawn along 14th Street, filled with laughing children. Who has room to store a toboggan in Manhattan on the off-chance of snow? Someone, clearly. Someone who has been waiting years for the white apocalypse.

But most Christmases, there are only cold drizzles, the icy rain that never seems to wash anything clean. I emptied my pockets on the way home from the bank: another Salvation Army kettle, a drunk man on the sidewalk with a hand-lettered sign I couldn't read, a woman rattling change in a paper cup. I hate the city, all tarted up in its tawdry Christmas clothes. Mewing us together on its streets, it forces us to see the human stain. It forces us to know. *It's not my fault*, I muttered as I blew on my cold hands. May God have mercy on us all. *It's . . . not . . . my . . . fault.*

The Witness of Dietrich von Hildebrand

John F. Crosby

Now that the Dietrich von Hildebrand Legacy Project has been founded with a view to republishing the works of this great thinker and in some cases translating them from German for the first time, it is worth recalling who Dietrich von Hildebrand was. Born in 1889, he studied philosophy in the phenomenological school of Edmund Husserl. He converted to Catholicism in 1914, partly under the influence of the great Catholic thinker Max Scheler. By 1930, he had become an important voice in German Catholicism, perhaps best known for his pioneering work on man and woman, and on marriage. One can trace the chapter on marriage in the Second Vatican Council's *Gaudium et Spes* back to Hildebrand's writings in the 1920s, in which he argued that the marital act has not only a procreative meaning but also a no-less-significant unitive meaning. But he was in those years also distinguishing himself in other ways: through his writings in moral and social philosophy and also through his original religious writings, especially his *Transformation in Christ*, which has become a kind of classic.

Hildebrand has the distinction of being one of the earliest opponents of National Socialism; already in 1923, when Hitler tried to seize power in Bavaria, Hildebrand's name was on a short list of enemies. He seems to have had from the beginning an unusual insight into a kind of gestalt of evil in Nazism. He tells in his memoirs that many of his contemporaries, including the German bishops gathered in Fulda in 1933, would seize on "positive elements" in Nazism, such as the recovery of German national pride after the humiliation of World War I and Versailles, or such as the exercise of real authority after postwar years of political indecision and drift. Some Catholics apparently wanted to distinguish between mainstream Nazism and the radical fringes of the movement, saying that, though the radical elements were certainly beyond the pale, the mainstream still had some good substance and was susceptible of being influenced in a Christian direction. All these "positive elements" made no impression on Hildebrand; they were for him nothing

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but so much dust thrown in his eyes to distract him from the fundamental reality of Nazism. He increasingly spoke of the face of the Anti-Christ in Hitler.

Hildebrand left Germany for Austria in March of 1933. He saw in the Austrian chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss the only statesman in Europe who was willing to stand up to Hitler. Hildebrand had always loved the Catholic identity of Austria, and now he thought that Catholic Austria, which had stopped the advance of the Turks in the seventeenth century, might stop the advance of Hitler in the twentieth. If Austria under the leadership of a resolute Catholic statesman was going to resist being annexed by Germany, then Hildebrand had found the battle he wanted to fight. It was not just a battle for the independence of Austria—similar to battles for the independence of Ireland or Poland—but a battle for Christian civilization against the anti-Christian barbarians in Berlin. So he moved to Vienna and founded a review in which he would do battle with the Nazi ideology at the level of philosophical and theological first principles. In the pages of his Viennese review, Hildebrand, living in constant danger of assassination, bore a witness that must not be forgotten.

One of his articles is entitled "The Struggle for the Human Person," a title that well expresses the issue that, according to Hildebrand, stood at the center of the conflict. He said "the signature of the age" was a certain anti-personalism. One expression of this anti-personalism was collectivism, the philosophy that takes human beings as mere parts in some collectivity. Hildebrand held that each human being, as a person called by God and answerable to God, is always more than a part in a social whole; as a person, each exists before God as his own whole and thus refuses to be completely contained in any social whole. Each is a person at a far deeper level of himself than he is a member of the German state or of the English people, to say nothing of some political party.

But Hildebrand understood well the appeal of collectivism. He observed that people were weary of liberal individualism, weary of being deprived of all deeper forms of solidarity with others. He acknowledged as a positive sign of the times this longing for a recovery of community. But he warned that people should not seek relief in collectivism, for then they would just swing from one kind of depersonalized existence to another. The task is rather to vindicate the human person, to recover community as composed of persons and not of mere parts. If it is unworthy of the human person to exist in a fundamental suspicion of others, individualistically fortified against them, it is no less unworthy of the human person to dissolve as a part into some social whole. The call of the moment, he said, is to move to a new plane of existence altogether, a plane beyond all liberal individualism and totalitarian collectivism. One sees what I meant above that he fought at the level of philosophical and theological first principles. And he did not think that the urgency of the moment was any excuse for avoiding first principles.

Hildebrand acknowledged another aspiration that was felt by many people of the time. Many were oppressed by the mechanical and artificial rationality that dominates modern life; they were longing to get beyond this sterile rationality and to participate in forms of life that were more abundant and organic. But while he welcomed the emergence of this aspiration, he was quick to detect an opening for the anti-personalism of the age. The danger, he explained again and again in his review, is that people will try to meet this very legitimate need by abandoning themselves to instinct and vital energy. They will repeat the blunder of Nietzsche and will play off a Dionysian exuberance of *Leben* against *Geist*, and with Nietzsche they will identify *Geist*, or the personal, with barren and degenerate forms of rationality and with a crippling excess of consciousness. At this point, the way is open to what Hildebrand called "the dreadful heresy of nationalism," for, when personal existence is discredited, people revert to the tribal, losing in the process the capacity to esteem other nations as well as their own; in the end they know of no other way to esteem their own nation than to assert themselves aggressively against other nations.

To this Hildebrand responded in his review that what is authentically personal cannot be reduced to artificial rationality. He took a particular delight in exploring the kinds of exuberance and overflowing abundance and even ecstasy that are not just instinctual and vital but are properly and eminently personal, such as the solidarity celebrated by Beethoven in the final movement of the Ninth Symphony. The ardor and festivity of this music gives us a glimpse of the abundant life available only at the level of person and spirit.

Hildebrand offered these analyses in the consciousness not of being isolated from the tumult of his time but of being a full participant in it and of making an indispensable contribution to resisting the advance of Nazism. The Nazis evidently agreed that he was fighting effectively against them. In 1937, the German ambassador to Austria, Franz von Papen, sent Hitler an urgent dispatch detailing the work of those anti-Nazi forces that Papen called "the worst and most dangerous enemies of the Third Reich

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in Austria." He informed Hitler that "the moving spirit behind these machinations is the well-known emigrant, Professor Dietrich von Hildebrand."

I just mentioned Nietzsche. There is one important point on which Hildebrand is in accord with Nietzsche. The Enlightenment had thought that one could eliminate the Christian God, and indeed eliminate God altogether, and still have morality, the same morality that Christians had upheld. Nietzsche was one of the first to see through this incoherence of thought. He pointed out that even so elementary a moral norm as respect for truth can no longer hold its ground once God is dead. What Nietzsche said about morality, Hildebrand says about man: Cut off from God and debunked by the reductionist philosophies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, man no longer occupies any special place in the world. For a time, man might retain a sense of some special dignity, but this is the last light cast by a setting sun. If God is dead, then the Hitlers and Stalins of the world are just treating human beings according to what they really are. It follows for Hildebrand that if we are going to take a principled stand against the totalitarians, we should not waste our time trying to restore Enlightenment civility, which is an ideal lacking in inner coherence; we have to go further back and do a much more radical work of retrieval and renewal in our thinking about man. "All of Western Christian civilization," Hildebrand wrote in his review, "stands and falls with the words of Genesis, 'God made man in His image.'"

So Hildebrand opposed his Christian personalism to the anti-personalism of the time. And it was on the basis of this personalism that he resisted anti-Semitism; he was in fact one of the most resolute voices in all of Europe on the evil of anti-Semitism. He did battle not only with the anti-Semitism of Nazism but also with the "ethical anti-Semitism" defended by the many Austrian Catholics who protested against all the negative and destructive cultural influences allegedly coming from the Jews. With an amazing independence from his intellectual milieu, Hildebrand resisted this anti-Semitism as something immoral and un-Christian. He apparently lost the support of many Austrian Catholics over this issue; many of them agreed with him until he spoke about the Jews.

We can express the greatness of Hildebrand by saying that he freed himself to an extraordinary degree from a perennial German danger. The strong metaphysical impulse of the German, he often said, bears a dubious fruit in the Hegelian philosophy of history, with its idea that a divine "world-spirit" is awakening in the great movements of world history. The German tendency, Hildebrand said, is to think that whatever erupts with dynamic power in history is part of this divine drama or at least has some ultimate significance. Thus one approaches each historic event or movement of thought with awe and is inhibited from ever criticizing it as fundamentally mistaken or disordered. Since National Socialism in Germany was unfolding with tremendous dynamic power, it was hard for a German not to look for some larger metaphysical significance, some fundamental truth of which it was the bearer, and so it was hard not to be incapacitated as a serious critic of it. I see it as a great personal and intellectual achievement of Hildebrand's that he discerned the monstrous evil of Nazism so clearly that the intense historical dynamism of it, though he lived in its midst it and felt it, counted as nothing for him. He did not think with Hegel that history is full of God: He thought with Christianity that history is under the judgment of God. This is why he was able to speak not just as a German professor but also as a Christian confessor.

The witness of Dietrich von Hildebrand is rooted in his Christian personalism, which is developed in his many original philosophical and religious works. These represent a major spiritual and intellectual resource for understanding the truth about the human person; they can empower us to think more clearly and more deeply about the human person and to fight more resolutely in our day the battle for the person that Hildebrand fought in his. When Hildebrand died in 1977, he left a rich legacy of philosophy and witness. The Dietrich von Hildebrand Legacy Project has come into existence for the sake of turning this legacy into a living resource for Christian intellectuals.

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I Went In, I Knew Not Where

I went in, I knew not where
and stayed, not knowing, but going
past the boundaries of knowing.

I knew not the place around me,
how I came there or where from,
but seeing where then I found me,
I sensed great things, and grew dumb—
since no words for them would come—
lacking all knowledge, but going
past the boundaries of knowing.

Of piety and of peace
I had perfect comprehension;
solitude without surcease
showed the straight way, whose intention—
too secret for me to mention—
left me stammering, but going
past the boundaries of knowing.

So wholly rapt, so astonished
was I, from myself divided,
that my very senses vanished
and left me there unprovided
with knowledge, my spirit guided
by learning unlearned, and going
past the boundaries of knowing.

He who reaches that place truly
wills himself from self to perish;
all he lately knew, seen newly,
seems trifles unfit to cherish;
his new knowledge grows to flourish
so that he lingers there, going
past the boundaries of knowing.

The higher up one is lifted,
the less one perceives by sight
how the darkest cloud has drifted
to elucidate the night;
He who knows the dark aright
endures forever, by going
past the boundaries of knowing.

This wisdom, wise by unknowing,
wields a power so complete
that the learnèd wise men throwing
wisdom against it compete
with a force none can defeat,
since their wisdom makes no showing
past the boundaries of knowing.

There is virtue so commanding
in this high knowledge that wit,
human skill and understanding
cannot hope to rival it
in one who knows how to pit
against self his selfless going
past the boundaries of knowing.

And if you should care to learn
what this mode of being wise is,
it is yearnings that discern
the Divine in all its guises,
whose merciful gift and prize is
to confound all knowledge, going
past the boundaries of knowing.

St. John of the Cross (1542-1591),
translated by Rhina P. Espaillat

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Coplas: In Pursuit

In pursuit of amatory
adventure, hope bid me fly
and I rose so high, so high
that I closed upon the quarry.

To achieve so great a height,
divine adventure pursuing,
I flew so far that the doing
lifted me clear beyond sight.
A flight so extraordinary
rendered me too faint to fly:
It was love drew me so high
that I closed upon the quarry.

As I rose up high and higher—
my divine prey still uncaught—
weary and heartsick, I thought,
fallen from my one desire,
"All such attempts must miscarry."
So cast down by this was I
that I rose up high, up high,
until I closed on the quarry.

Somehow I contrived to go
a thousandfold by once reaching:
heaven grants to the beseeching
what they earn through hope. For no
prize but this prey would I tarry,
and hope raised me by and by,
until I was high, so high
that I closed upon the quarry.

St. John of the Cross (1542-1591),
translated by Rhina P. Espaillat

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Believing in the Global South

Philip Jenkins

Though prophecy rarely lends itself to empirical verification, one exception might be an observation of St. Vincent de Paul's, writing about the year 1640. This was one of the grimmest periods of European history, the most desperate days of the Thirty Years' War. In those awful days, Vincent noted that Jesus promised that his Church would last until the end of time, but he never mentioned Europe. The Church of the future, Vincent said, would be the Church of South America, of Africa, of China and Japan. Although we might argue about the inclusion of Japan in that list, St. Vincent's basic point remains sound and prophetic. Christianity, a religion that was born in Africa and Asia, has in our lifetimes decided to go home. Our traditional concept of the Christian world as a predominantly white and Euro-American world—of western Christianity, in fact—is no longer the norm.

Christianity should enjoy a worldwide boom in the coming decades, but the vast majority of believers will be neither white nor European nor Euro-American. According to the statistical tables produced by the respected Center for the Study of Global Christianity, some 2.1 billion Christians were alive in 2005, about one-third of the planetary population. The largest single bloc, some 531 million people, is still to be found in Europe. Latin America, though, is already close behind with 511 million, Africa has 389 million, and 344 million Asians profess Christianity. North America claims about 226 million believers. Now, we need not accept these figures in precise detail, and I personally believe that the Asian figures are too high. Even so, a large share of the Christian world is already located in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Just as striking are the long-term trends. The number of African Christians is growing at around 2.36 percent annually, which would lead us to project a doubling of the continent's Christian population in less than thirty years.

If we extrapolate these figures to the year 2025, the southern predominance becomes still more marked. Assuming no great gains or losses through conversion, then there would be around 2.6 billion Christians, of whom 595 million would live in Africa, 623 million in Latin America, and 498 million in Asia. Europe, with 513 million, would have slipped to third place. Africa and Latin America would thus be in competition for the title of most Christian continent. By 2050, Christianity will be chiefly the religion of Africa and the African diaspora. By then, there will be about three billion Christians in the world, and the proportion of those who will be white and non-Latino will be between one-fifth and one-sixth the total. If we project the largest Christian populations by 2050, the United States will still be at the head of the list, followed by Brazil, Mexico, the Philippines, Nigeria, the Congo, Ethiopia, and China. And even in the United States, many of the Christians will be of Hispanic, Asian, and African origin. By that point, one-third of all Americans will have Latino or Asian roots—roots that will be overwhelmingly Christian. This does not include those Americans of African origin, people who are either African Americans or of more recent African stock.

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Some figures cry out for special notice. Look, for instance, at the story of Christian growth in Africa. In 1900, Africa had 10 million Christians representing about 10 percent of the population; by 2000, this figure had grown to 360 million, representing about half the population. Quantitatively, this may well be the largest shift in religious affiliation that has ever occurred, anywhere. If we focus on the Catholic population alone, Africa had 1.9 million Catholics in 1900, but by 2000 the continent's Catholic population had risen to 130 million, representing a gross increase of 6,708 percent. And yet another figure for the Catholic world should give us pause. In 2000, there were more Catholic baptisms in the Philippines than in France, Spain, Italy, and Poland combined. By 2025, approximately 60 percent of Catholics around the world will probably live in Africa and Latin America alone—not counting the Philippines, China, or India—and the proportion should reach two-thirds before 2050. At that point, European and Euro-American Catholics will be a small fragment of a church dominated by Filipinos, Mexicans, Brazilians, Nigerians, and Congolese.

If we were just noting the story of an ethnic and geographic shift, that would be an interesting story in its own right, but one of limited significance. Far more important, though, is the change in belief and practice in the growing churches of the Global South. Part of the change is founded in social and economic realities. At least for the foreseeable future, members of a southern-dominated church are likely to be among the poorer people on the planet, in marked contrast to the older western-dominated world.

For this reason, some western Christians have since the 1960s expected that the religion of their Third World brethren would be fervently liberal, activist, and even revolutionary, the model represented by liberation theology. In this view, the new Christianity would chiefly be concerned with pulling down the mighty from their seats, through political action or even armed struggle. All too often, though, these hopes have proved illusory. Frequently, the liberationist voices emanating from the Third World proved to derive from clerics trained in Europe and North America, and their ideas won only limited local appeal. Southern Christians would not avoid political activism, but they would become involved strictly on their own terms. While many espoused political *liberation*, they made it inseparable from *deliverance* from supernatural evil. The two terms are indeed related linguistically and often appear together in biblical texts, but the juxtaposition of the two thought-worlds of liberation and deliverance seems as baffling for many Euro-Americans as it is natural for Christians in the Global South.

Of course, we must be careful about generalizations concerning the vast and diverse world of southern Christianities, and I stress the plural. There is no single southern Christianity, any more than there is such a thing as European or North American Christianity: Each of these terms involves numerous components, some strongly at odds with the others.

Yet we can reasonably say that many Global South Christians are more conservative in terms of both beliefs and moral teaching than are the mainstream churches of the Global North, and this is especially true in Africa. The churches that have made most dramatic progress in the Global South have been either Catholic (of a traditionalist and fideistic kind) or evangelical and Pentecostal Protestant sects. Membership in Pentecostal and independent churches already runs into the hundreds of millions, and congregations are located in precisely the regions of fastest population growth. Within a few decades, such denominations will represent a far-larger segment of global Christianity and just conceivably a majority. These newer churches preach deep personal faith and communal orthodoxy, mysticism, and puritanism, all founded on clear scriptural authority. They preach messages that, to a westerner, appear simplistically charismatic, visionary, and apocalyptic. In this thought-world, prophecy is an everyday reality, while faith healing, exorcism, and dream-visions are all fundamental parts of religious sensibility. For better or worse, the dominant churches of the future could have much in common with those of medieval or early modern European times.

As recently as a decade ago, North–South differences made little impact on the consciousness of most American Christians. What has changed this most radically, perhaps, has been the sharp split within the Episcopal Church (ECUSA) and the wider Anglican Communion, chiefly over issues of gender and sexuality. The story has been often told. The prime detonator was the Episcopal decision in 2003 to approve the ordination of Gene Robinson, a noncelibate homosexual, to the diocese of New Hampshire, a decision that infuriated the thriving Anglican churches of Africa. Since that time, North–South conflicts have intensified. Under the leadership of the Nigerian church (some 20 million strong), an alliance of conservative Global South churches has flatly accused the Americans and British of departing far from biblical principles: "The unscriptural innovations of North American and some western provinces on issues of human sexuality undermine the basic message of redemption and the power of the Cross to transform lives. These departures are a symp-

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tom of a deeper problem, which is the diminution of the authority of Holy Scripture."

Schism within the communion now seems likely. In the strong words of one conservative English bishop, Michael Nazir-Ali, "Nobody wants a split, but if you think you have virtually two religions in a single church, something has got to give sometime." To describe the two sides as constituting separate *religions*, rather than different perspectives on one common Christian faith, is a significant departure. Rowan Williams further shocked American liberals when he suggested creating a two-tier system within the Anglican Communion, in which churches like ECUSA that followed practices rejected by the wider communion would possess only associate rather than full membership. Yet even this response to ECUSA was not enough for the Nigerians, who urged that a "cancerous lump in the body should be excised if it has defied every known cure." In the words of Kenyan archbishop Benjamin Nzimbi, "Our understanding of the Bible is different from them. We are two different churches."

For many Americans, and not just liberals, the Anglican feud suggests a grim and even frightening future for Christianity, a sign perhaps that the shift in global numbers means the inevitable triumph of a kind of fundamentalist faith deeply imbued with superstition. Underlying this vision is a grave doubt about the religious substance of the Christianity emerging from Africa or Asia: Is it really Christianity or, in effect, a survival of older animism, complete with tribal sexual codes? At an Episcopal gathering in 2002, one gay activist condemned African conservatives for "monkeying around" in the church: "All I have to say to these bishops is: Go back to the jungle where you came from!" Sober academics seek other reasons for the charismatic nature of much religion in the Global South. Why, for instance, do these churches so emphasize healing, visions, and prophecy? Perhaps, one might suggest, they are rather too much in contact with their pre-Christian roots, with traditional worlds of healing or magic or shamanism.

I suggest a different interpretation. Whatever we think of specific moral or political questions at issue between Global North and South, the critical difference concerns attitudes to authority, and any acquaintance with African or Asian Christianity soon indicates the pervasive importance of the Bible and of biblical stories. The Bible has found a congenial home among communities who identify with the social and economic realities it portrays, no less than among the political environments in which Christians find themselves. Cultures that readily identify with biblical worldviews find it easier to read the Bible not just as historical fact but also as relevant instruction for daily conduct.

Attitudes to the Old Testament provide a good example. For many American Christians, it is obvious that the stories of the ancient Hebrew world arise from an utterly different social and economic setting of limited practical relevance to a modern society. In contrast, it is precisely the Old Testament world that speaks in contemporary tones to many African and Asian Christians. "If present day Africans still find it difficult to be at home with the Old Testament, they might need to watch out to see if they have not lost their Africanness in one way or the other," writes Madipoane Masenya, a feminist liberal theologian from South Africa. Could a comparable observation conceivably be made of contemporary Europeans or North Americans?

Cultural affinities with the biblical world lead African and Asian Christians to see the Old Testament as their story, their book. In Africa particularly, Christians have long been excited by the obvious cultural parallels that exist between their own societies and those of the Hebrew Old Testament. In much of Africa, social events frequently involve some kind of sacrifice or libation, as do celebrations of key events in the ceremonial year.

In the New Testament, the Letter to the Hebrews and the Book of Revelation seem especially relevant. For modern Africans, as for the original audience of Revelation, writes Fidon Mwombeki, a Tanzanian Lutheran leader, "[t]he dead are still living in the other world, and they influence the life of those in this world." He discusses the exalted picture of God and the common belief that the future can be seen through visions, dreams, and revelations. Moreover, he writes: "the dominant symbols of the lamb, the throne, the blood, and the animals are common in African religious symbolism. The sacrificial blood, as well as innocent human blood crying from the ground (Rev. 6:10), corresponds to present-day African beliefs. No one in Africa can expect to get away with shedding innocent blood. At the same time, the lamb as the animal of sacrifice slaughtered for the sins of humanity is a dominant symbol both in Revelation and in African beliefs."

Evangelical religion with a central notion of being saved in the blood has exercised immense appeal in modern Africa. Perhaps the greatest African hymn is "Tukutendereza Yesu," the song of the blood of the lamb. When observers complain that revivals and healing crusades make little explicit reference to evangelical theology, that is partly because pastors can reasonably assume their hearers will already know so many of

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these doctrines. A sacrificial society is uniquely equipped to understand theories of atonement, which can never have more than metaphorical power in a culture such as our own. It is one thing to sing of sacrifice, to hymn the power in the blood; it is quite another to have seen and smelled the event take place. How many American evangelicals have had such an experience?

The more time one spends with southern Christians, reading the Bible through their eyes, the harder it is to see the Bible as simply a historical text. And the more immediately one understands the biblical world, the easier it becomes to accept the authority of the text. In the words of another very liberal theologian, Kenya's Musimbi Kanyoro, "Those cultures which are far removed from biblical culture risk reading the Bible as fiction."

Particularly appealing are the parables, in which Jesus incorporated so many observations of contemporary conditions. Across Africa and Asia, millions of modern readers have been on roads where a traveler is likely to be robbed and left for dead, without much hope of intervention by official agencies. They understand accounts of streets teeming with the sick. They know that a poor woman who loses a tiny sum of money would search frantically for coins that could allow her children to eat that night. In many countries, readers appreciate the picture of the capricious rich man, who offers hospitality on one occasion but on another day demands payment of exorbitant debts and obligations, and who must not on any account be offended.

On occasion, the social background of the Global South allows readers to see dimensions of the text that have been largely lost in a postindustrial world. Like Europeans in bygone centuries, many modern Africans and Asians read biblical tales of plague and famine as powerfully contemporary. Perhaps only hungry eyes can appreciate just how thoroughly images of food and feasting, eating and starving, pervade both Testaments. Throughout the Bible, being filled with food is for most people an unusual prospect, as was true for most societies before the eighteenth century, including those of western Europe. In Luke's Magnificat, Mary celebrates a radical vision of a society in which God will fill the hungry while sending the rich away empty. When the prodigal son comes home, driven by famine, he is given a banquet complete with fatted calf.

Encountering such visions of plenty has an immeasurably greater impact in a society that knows hunger than in a western community where the most prominent food-related story of recent years was an alleged obesity epidemic. The spirit of the biblical world is movingly summarized by the contemporary grace said by rural Chinese Christians: "Today's food is not easy to come by. God gives it to us. After we eat it, we will not be sick. God protects us so that we can have the next meal. He protects us so everything is prosperous and we have peace. All our family members, from young to old, need the protection from God."

Nor can most African or Asian readers be complacent about the easy availability of water. The numerous biblical passages about plentiful water mean a great deal in nations that can only dream of such a luxury. Such readers share the amazed expectation of the Samaritan woman at the well, when Jesus promises her a reliable source of living water. Within a few years, perhaps half the world's people will live in countries that are lacking sufficient water.

One of the most harrowing stories of the whole Bible occurs in Elisha's time, when a woman begs the king to enforce the agreement she had made with her neighbor in response to the raging famine. First they would eat the son of one woman, then the son of another, but the other woman was reneging on the deal. Would the king not grant her justice, by ordering the second act of cannibalism? However grotesque the story, millions of modern readers can understand the desperation that lies at its center. They know that, while men can sometimes flee a famine-stricken area, women remain behind with the children. How many American churches have ever heard sermons on this particular text?

Food shortages form the subject of modern Christian hymns and writings. Ghanaian poet Afua Kuma declares:

The famine has become severe.
Let us go and tell Jesus!
He is the one who
When he raises his hands
Gives even our enemies their share
And our brothers bring head pans
To carry the food away.

The radicalism can hardly be appreciated in societies that do not know famine: Not only does God grant food in time of hunger, but he even pours blessings on our enemies.

The prevalence of hunger and natural disaster helps explain the enormous popularity in Christian Africa and Asia of the Book of Ruth, a tale of a society devastated by famine, in which women survive by depending on each other and on trusted kin. In the American context, the book attracts some interest from feminist scholars, while Ruth's plea to Naomi, "entreat me not

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to leave thee," is included in blessing rites for same-sex couples. In the Global South, the book's interest lies in how the various characters faithfully fulfill their obligations to each other and their relatives. What the North reads in moral or individualistic terms remains for the South social and communal.

Particularly appealing in Global South churches are the wisdom texts, such as Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, but also the New Testament's Epistle of James. Wisdom literature is popular, in part, because of its profound sense of the transience of life. One of the most-used sermon texts in Africa is James 4:14: "Ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Echoes of this text often resurface in paraphrased form. In the Sudan, which for some forty years has suffered repeated civil wars and the vicious persecution of non-Muslims, one Christian chorus teaches the grim truth that "[y]ou are here today but tomorrow you'll be here no more. Our only hope is Jesus Christ, so receive him now." In the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami, sermons in south and east Asian churches made great use of James.

If there is a single critical marker distinguishing the Christianity of the modern West from the New Testament world, it is the basic belief in the supernatural character of evil, which is manifested equally in sickness, repression, wickedness, and compulsiveness. The North–South divide is not absolute, and some Euro-American Christians accept theories of the diabolic and demonic, of supernatural warfare and spiritual healing. Yet most northern-world Christians share the bemusement, the mockery, with which the more secular-minded regard such manifestations. For post-Enlightenment Christians in the West, the demonic elements in the New Testament mean so little that they are scarcely even an embarrassment anymore. Many westerners read over such passages and attribute them to a long-departed stage of scientific development. Most northern readers today would label believers in demons and witchcraft irredeemably premodern, prescientific, and probably preliterate—and such beliefs would cast doubt on believers' claims to an authentic or intelligent religion.

Yet the supernatural approach certainly harks back to the ancient roots of Christianity. To read the gospels is to make the intimate acquaintance of demons and demonic forces. Precious little is left of the New Testament after we purge all mentions of angels, demons, and spirits. Shorn of healing and miraculous cures, the four gospels would be a slim pamphlet indeed. For the earliest followers of Jesus—and presumably for Jesus himself—healing and exorcism were essential components of his proclamation. In his acts of healing, Jesus was not just curing individuals but trampling diabolical forces underfoot, and the signs and wonders represented visible and material tokens of Christ's victory over real forces of evil.

Leaders of the early church carried on this tradition. One landmark in the history of trinitarian doctrine is the creed proclaimed by the third-century saint Gregory Thaumaturgus. Yet Gregory's title name, *Thaumaturgus*, "wonder-worker," recalls his fame as an exorcist and healer who repeatedly overcame demons and pagan deities. Describing the Christian message first brought to Europe and the Roman frontier lands, Peter Brown comments that "Christians worshipped the one high God; but unlike modern post-Enlightenment Christians, who are wary of the notion of a universe crowded with intermediary beings, they positively gloried in the closeness of invisible guides and protectors. . . . They did not carry around in their heads the empty skies of [modern European] missionary Christianity."

For northerners, such demonological readings raise troubling questions about the future of Christianity. Yet a Christian worldview that acknowledges supernatural evil does not disqualify itself from participation in worldly struggles, including movements for far-reaching social and economic transformation. Whatever their spiritual truth—whatever their fidelity to Christian tradition—supernatural approaches can be valuable in moving societies away from pernicious traditional superstitions. For instance, offering distinctively Christian solutions to witchcraft helps disarm the sometimes bloody practices of anti-witchcraft rituals. In a relatively short time, the new Christian emphasis on prayer and Bible reading defuses the fatalism inherent in a traditional system based on such notions as witchcraft, curses, and the power of ancestors. Instead, Christians are taught to rely on faith and on the role of the individual, who is no longer a slave to destiny or fate. By treating older notions of spiritual evil seriously, Christians are leading an epochal cultural revolution.

For millions of modern Christians—as for the contemporaries of Gregory Thaumaturgus—proclaiming the power of Jesus means declaring his victory over conquered forces of evil. One hymn from the Transvaal declares:

Jesus Christ is Conqueror
By his resurrection he overcame death itself
By his resurrection he overcame all things
He overcame magic
He overcame amulets and charms
He overcame the darkness of demon possession

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He overcame dread
When we are with him
We also conquer.

Such a hymn could easily have been sung by Mediterranean Christians of the first three centuries after Jesus' time. Still more startlingly martial is a hymn of the Ghanaian Afua Kuma:

If Satan troubles us
Jesus Christ
You who are the lion of the grasslands
You whose claws are sharp
Will tear out his entrails
And leave them on the ground
For the flies to eat.

Demonology is credible for African and Asian churches in a way it can scarcely be for most educated westerners, and so are ideas of exorcism and healing. A leader of the West African Musama Disco Christo Church preaches: "We are all here in this church because we have found healing here. But for this church, the great majority of us here assembled would not be alive today. That is the reason why we are here." The point is so obvious in Africa, and so very strange to western believers.

Spiritual healing is accepted across most denominations, including those that in North America would be regarded as strictly mainstream. At a healing revival in Uganda, a woman reported being cured of a spinal complaint. After this event, "a whole stream of people . . . stood up one by one to declare joyfully what Jesus had done for them. They had been dumb, mad or psychologically disturbed; crippled, epileptic, hemorrhaging; they had had cancer, epilepsy and asthma. By turns they declared that they had been healed by prayer and the power of the Lord Jesus. So many people wanted to testify that in the end the parish catechist simply resorted to calling out the afflictions and doing a head count of those who had been healed." This may sound like the typical currency of charismatic movements the world over, except that this particular example occurred in a Roman Catholic church, through the ministry of an Indian priest, and the initial miracle described took place during the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.

Western observers of Christianity in the Global South often try to impose familiar categories: divisions between conservative and liberal, for instance, or otherworldly charismatics and this-worldly social activists. Countless American examples demonstrate the flaws in this analysis, but in the churches of the Global South the division makes even less sense. Deliverance and liberation are one.

The biblical enthusiasm in the Global South is often embraced by exactly those groups ordinarily portrayed as the victims of reactionary religion, particularly women. In Titus Presler's book *The Transfigured Night*, a study of the Zimbabwean night-vigil movement, we hear that "Charismatic renewal, conflict with demons, and the liberation of women are other fruits bearing directly on the churches' mission in Zimbabwe." For African Christians, women's social emancipation must be seen in the context of spiritual warfare and exorcism: Both are manifestations of "loosing," of liberation, of deliverance. Through the churches, through the Bible, previously marginalized groups learn to speak out for the first time in the history of those cultures.

Partly, the willingness to explore socially radical solutions reflects a fundamental distrust of secular authority and institutions that again marks a difference between North and South. The New Testament portrays persecution as a likely consequence of Christian belief. In Mark's gospel, Jesus warns his followers of bleak times to come, warns about *when* they are led before a court, not *if*.

Most western readers see in such passages only historical references to long-gone times of persecution. But persecution is a real prospect for much of the new Christianity, and martyrdom is a continuing reality for many African and Asian churches. All too often, secular ideologies appear destructive: Their claims to provide growth and improvement prove farcically false, and they sometimes undertake bloody repression. Even when states are not actively homicidal, the common assumption—in the twenty-first century, as in the first—is that the state is a hostile institution and that secular society must be seen as dangerous territory in which believers tread at their peril. Christians are rarely wise to put their faith in princes or presidents. Southern Christians easily identify with the profoundly anti-state and separatist texts in the New Testament produced by early believers living within the Roman Empire. Such diffidence—to say the least—about the secular world contrasts sharply with attitudes in the Global North. If Global South believers are accused of "supernaturalism," we might well ask what grounds they would have for putting their trust in developments in this unjust world.

In many matters, the Christianity of Africa and Asia operates in a world closely congruent with the early or medieval forms of the faith. Societies with a potent sense of the communal and collective can appreciate the Old Testament notion of national righteousness and national sin, ideas that can justify harsh moral

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legislation but that also encourage prophetic visions of social justice. A world of biting poverty and endemic disaster understands the transience of human life—and, equally, of states. Societies that know the threat of persecution, that have experienced anti-Christian violence in living memory, feel a strong affinity to the sections of the Bible that regard the secular state coldly, that present suffering as the likely lot of the Christian in this life. In such communities, apocalyptic literature—especially the Book of Revelation—has a near-documentary relevance.

A discussion of "Believing in the Global South" must, of course, examine the nature of belief in the Christian churches in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. But it is also worth thinking about the many in Europe or North America who place their faith in that emerging Christianity, who *believe* in the Global South.

Over the past half-century, whenever southern Christianity has gained attention in North America or Europe, it has been through what might be termed two dreams—two competing visions, each trying to deploy that new religious movement for its own purposes. For the left, attracted by visions of liberation, the rise of the South suggests that northern Christians must commit themselves to social and political activism at home, to ensuring economic justice and combating racism, to promoting cultural diversity. Conservatives, in contrast, emphasize the moral and sexual conservatism of the emerging churches and seek to enlist them as natural allies.

For both the Liberation Dream and the Conservative Dream, the new South has seemed useful, politically and rhetorically. Each, in its different way, expects the southern churches to reproduce western obsessions and approaches rather than to evolve their own distinctive solutions to their own particular problems.

We must be cautious about seeing such new movements through the lens of our own conflicts. As an analogy, imagine the situation in the seventh or eighth centuries in what was still, numerically and culturally, the Near Eastern heart of Christianity, in Syria or Mesopotamia. Picture a meeting of church leaders who have gathered to hear a report from a traveler from the remote barbarian world of western Europe.

The traveler delights his listeners by telling them of the many new conversions among the strange peoples of England or Germany and the creation of whole new dioceses in the midst of the northern forests. Impatiently, the assembled hierarchs press him to answer the key question: This new Christianity coming into being, is it the Christianity of Edessa or of Damascus? Where do the new converts stand on the crucial issues of the day: on the Monothelite heresy, on Iconoclasm? When the traveler tells them, regretfully, that these issues really do not register in those parts of the world, where religious life has utterly different concerns and emphases, the Syrians are alarmed. Is this really a new Christianity, they ask, or is it some new syncretistic horror? How can any Christian not be centrally concerned with these issues? And while Syrian Christianity carried on debating these questions to exhaustion, the new churches of Europe entered a great age of spiritual growth and intellectual endeavor.

As in those times, it is extremely difficult to envisage the future trajectory of the faith. Who in that age could have foreseen the global expansion of that poor hatchling, western Christianity? Today, similarly, we see promising signs of growth as southern Christians begin evangelizing the North, in the process changing many familiar aspects of belief and practice and exporting cultural traits presently found only in Africa or Latin America.

We can only speculate what this future synthesis might look like. But underlying all these possibilities is one solid reality. However partisan the interpretations of the new Christianity, however paternalistic, there can be no doubt that the emerging Christian world will be anchored in the southern continents. When we look at today's new faces of Christianity, we are seeing the shape of the Christian future. FT

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Looking for "Persons" in the Law

Mary Ann Glendon

Given the close relation between a country's law and its culture, it is only to be expected that there will be considerable variation in the way legal systems conceptualize human personhood. Like a nation's art, literature, songs, and poetry, law both reflects and helps to shape the stories we tell ourselves and our children about who we are as a people, where we came from, and what we aspire to be. In some countries, law's role in these narratives is relatively minor. But there is no place where law has played a more prominent role in a nation's conception of itself than in the United States.

The early Americans' peculiar attachment to the law was one of the first things Tocqueville noticed as he traveled about the new nation. "The spirit of the law," he wrote, "born within schools and courts . . . infiltrates through society right down to the lowest ranks, till finally the whole people have contracted some of the ways and tastes of a magistrate." As the population has increased in size and diversity, the law has arguably become the principal carrier of the few values that command broad allegiance among citizens of many different cultural backgrounds.

In such a country, it was perhaps inevitable that legal images of personhood would exert a certain influence on the way we think about human nature. But concepts that may serve useful purposes within a particular discipline can be mischievous when they migrate into other contexts. Everyone understands, for example, that while "economic man" is a helpful tool for economists, a person motivated solely by rational profit maximization in real life would be a sociopath. Legal constructs need to be treated with similar caution, for as cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz has pointed out, "Whatever law is after, it is not the whole story."

The predominant image of the human person in American law is of a creature who bears little resemblance to any human being that has ever lived: a free, self-determining, and self-sufficient individual. It's not that the image doesn't resonate. Comparative opinion studies tell us that Americans occupy one end of the world spectrum in the proportion who say they value freedom over equality, in the proportion who say they believe that success in life is determined by individual efforts, and in the proportion who attach more importance to freedom from state interference than to state guarantees of minimum subsistence in cases of need. According to a 2002 survey, the percentages of Americans who expressed such views were more than double the European figures. We are a gambling, profit-making, risk-taking people with a high rate of geographical, social, and marital mobility. But we also have an exceptional history of sociability, hospitality and generosity, banding together in all sorts of associations, welcoming strangers to our shores, and lending a helping hand even to our defeated enemies.

But a wholly self-sufficient person, Aristotle remarked long ago, is either a beast or a god. So how did such an incomplete concept about human nature gain such a prominent place in our legal story?

The eighteenth century was a time when revolutionaries and, later, statesmen in France and America were open to an unusual degree to the ideas of philosophers. That, perhaps, explains why the writings of the American founders contain a good

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deal of discussion about human nature. There are, in fact, dozens of references to "the nature of man" in the *Federalist Papers.* Those essays were strongly influenced by English political theorists who, in their efforts to delegitimate monarchical claims of divine right, had painted vivid pictures of man as free and solitary in an imaginary "state of nature." The state of affairs that writers like John Locke presented as "natural" bears little relation to what the social sciences tell us about human beings and simple societies. Family life and other forms of human sociability, not to mention women, are scarcely visible in their accounts. The "new science of politics" had much more to say about conflict among human beings than about cooperation.

The authors of the *Federalist Papers* followed Locke and his forerunner Hobbes in placing greater emphasis on the dangers human beings pose to one another than on the human capacity for cooperative living. Though acknowledging that there are "qualities in human nature which justify a certain portion of esteem and confidence," they asserted that "men are much more disposed to vex and oppress each other than to co-operate for their common good." In their view, it is the dangerous propensities of human beings that give rise to the need for government and that pose a constant threat to governments once established. The U.S. Constitution was devised, accordingly, with structures to hold selfishness and ambition in check, and to channel potentially divisive energies into the pursuit of wealth, comfort, and security.

Mistrust of human nature went hand in glove with mistrust of government, which, after all, is composed of men. In the most famous passage of *The Federalist,* Madison wrote:

> It may be a reflection on human nature that such devices [as checks and balances] should be necessary to control the abuses of government. But what is government itself but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, no external or internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself.

A careful reading of the *Federalist Papers*, however, discloses something puzzling about its vision of personhood. On the one hand, the authors took an exceedingly dim view of human nature, saying things like: "If impulse and opportunity be suffered to coincide, we well know that neither moral nor religious motives can be relied on as an adequate control." Yet, at the same time, they recognized that the success of the democratic experiment would be crucially dependent on the support of virtuous and public-spirited citizens and statesmen. (Indeed, James Madison specifically acknowledged that republican government required a higher degree of civic virtue than did any other form.)

So how can one explain the framers' apparent unconcern about where they would find citizens with the qualities of character their innovative design for self-government demanded? The simplest and most probable explanation is that they relied on the small structures of civil society—families and tight-knit communities—to inculcate the republican virtues of self-restraint and care for the common good. The Founding Fathers had good reason to assume they could take the necessary cultural conditions for granted. The non-slave population of the thirteen states (about three million people) was mainly composed of farmers, merchants, and artisans who lived in self-governing townships bound together by widely shared moral and religious beliefs. Biblical religion was pervasive, as were habits of associating for all sorts of cooperative ventures, from building a neighbor's barn to keeping the town roads and fences in repair.

The apparent contradiction between the ideas about man informing the Constitution and the sociable reality of life in the colonies diminishes when one recalls that the Constitution was constructed as a framework for a *federal* government. It specifically provides that all powers not specifically delegated to the federal government are reserved to the states. The laws of the states, at the time of the founding and until the mid-twentieth century, were informed by more capacious notions of personhood, influenced in countless ways by biblical and classical understandings of human nature. Those local arrangements (which in some states even included established churches) were promoted and protected by the Constitution's federal structure. So, even though "fraternity" (or, as we would say today, "solidarity") was absent from the political vocabulary of the founders, habits of cooperative living were fostered in numerous ways by local laws and customs.

As the population expanded, however, common understandings grew fewer and national law assumed more importance as a carrier of values. The stage was set for ideas that had served well enough for the purpose of establishing limited government to migrate from political theory into law. One of the first legal commentators to remark critically on the unusual degree of individualism in American law

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seems to have been the twentieth-century legal philosopher and comparatist Roscoe Pound. Pound noted that the idea of an "isolated individual was at the center of many of our most significant legal doctrines."

While all modern legal systems could be said to be individualistic in comparison to premodern law, Pound regarded American legal thought as distinguished by "an ultra-individualism, an uncompromising insistence upon individual interests and individual property as a focal point of jurisprudence." He speculated that this was due to a unique fusion of Puritanism with the pioneer spirit and with eighteenth-century ideas of natural right. These factors combined, he wrote, to give an "added emphasis to individualist ideas in the formative period of our legal system that served to stamp them upon our theory and practice and keep them alive and active," even after English legal thought had taken a different direction.

Thus did political ideas originating in English power struggles between Crown and Parliament acquire the status of myth and symbol in the former English colony. The view of man as naturally independent, together with the idea of government as involving a necessary but regrettable sacrifice of some, but not all, of our natural liberty, fueled the mistrust of government that has long been characteristic of American constitutionalism. Even after the United States established its social security system in the 1930s, and even though the power of the federal government has vastly expanded, the legal system has never accepted the positive vision of an affirmatively acting state that informs many constitutions in the Romano-Germanic tradition. The American rights tradition has long emphasized political and civil liberties, framed as "negative rights" (restraints on government), but has not incorporated the post–World War II trend in many other liberal democracies to accord constitutional status to certain programmatic obligations on the part of the state toward citizens.

The American legal system thus displays several distinctive features when compared with continental European systems. The American rights tradition confers its highest priority on individual freedom from governmental constraints. Rights tend to be formulated without explicit mention of their limits or of their relation to responsibilities or to other rights. Personal freedom is protected by procedures but lacks an explicit normative structure.

A more complex dialect of freedom and responsibility characterizes the dignitarian rights language that one finds in several post–World War II documents—such as the German 1949 Basic Law and the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as in the social teachings of the Catholic Church as elaborated by Popes John XXIII and John Paul II. In these documents, specific rights are typically formulated so as to make clear that they are related to one another, that certain groups as well as individuals have rights, and that political entities, as well as citizens, have responsibilities. Rights are envisioned not only as protected by fair procedures but also as grounded and situated in a normative framework based on human dignity. The first article of the postwar German Constitution, for example, provides this: "The dignity of man shall be inviolable. To respect and protect it shall be the highest duty of the State."

Underlying these divergent concepts of rights are somewhat different notions about the person who is endowed with rights. While the rights-bearer in the U.S. constitutional tradition tends to be imagined as an independent, highly autonomous, self-determining being, the dignitarian systems tend to make explicit that each person is constituted in important ways by and through his relations with others. For example, American judges and lawyers frequently quote former justice Louis Brandeis' dictum that the "most comprehensive of rights and the right most valued by civilized men" is "the right to be let alone" (an idea that would sound rather strange in many parts of the world). The German Constitutional Court, by contrast, takes a more relational view of personhood, as expressed in its often-cited 1954 decision stating: "The image of man in the Basic Law is not that of an isolated, sovereign individual. The tension between the individual and society is resolved in favor of coordination and interdependence with the community without touching the intrinsic value of the person."

A postmodern touch was added to the legal portrait of the lone rights-bearer in 1992 when a plurality of U.S. Supreme Court justices advanced a vision of the self as invented and reinvented through the exercise of the individual's will, limited by nothing but subjective preference. Ruling on the constitutionality of a state abortion law in *Casey v. Planned Parenthood*, the justices shifted the ground for abortion rights from privacy to liberty. To require a married woman to notify her husband of her intent to have an abortion, they held, would violate a woman's liberty. In so holding, they announced a theory that endows human personhood with the freedom "to define one's own concept of existence, of the meaning of the universe, and of the mystery of human life." That freedom, they said, "lies at the heart of liberty" because "beliefs in these matters could not define the attributes of personhood were they formed under compulsion of the State." Despite criticisms that such an unbounded definition of liberty, if taken seriously,

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would undermine the basis of all law, a majority of the Court reaffirmed it in 2003 in *Lawrence v. Texas,* the decision invalidating penalties for homosexual sodomy.

The Court majority's current notion of freedom is thus quite distant from understandings of freedom that stress the dignity of the person as actualized through relations with others and through the development of one's ability to exercise freedom wisely and well. Compare, for example, the German Constitutional Court's statement in a 1977 case that "freedom within the meaning of the Basic Law is not that of an isolated and self-regarding individual but rather that of a person related to and bound by the community."

Conspicuously missing from both the American and the German courts' formulations is attention to how the exercise of our freedoms affects the kinds of persons we become, and the way in which the choices of citizens collectively affect the kind of society that we are bringing into being. Perhaps that is too much to expect. But in a legalistic, pluralistic society like that of the United States, the silences of the law can speak.

The highly individualistic concept of personhood advanced by Supreme Court majorities in the late twentieth century both reflected and legitimated attitudes that were then gaining ground in American culture—especially elite and media culture. A latter-day Tocqueville might observe that the sturdy self-reliance and independence of mind he so admired have been eroded in many quarters by understandings of liberty as individual freedom from all forms of social and legal constraint.

There are, of course, social and legal forces that serve as countercurrents to excessive individualism in American law. Nevertheless, many citizens in our legalistic and heterogeneous society tend to regard the Supreme Court's pronouncements not merely as legal rulings but also as moral teachings grounded in the country's most sacred civic document. Thus, when nine justices in black robes (or even a majority of them) solemnly announce that something is legally permissible—or constitutionally required—many people take such decisions as assurance that the behavior in question is morally acceptable as well.

Manifestations of an increasingly "ultra-individualistic" anthropology can be traced in numerous laws and policies relating to the family, schools, religion, and voluntary associations. American church-state law since the 1940s, for example, has been so influenced by the notion of religion as a private affair "between an individual and his God" that it has often failed to protect the associational and institutional dimensions of religious freedom. In private law, the influence of the myth of the self-sufficient individual connected to others only by choice is strikingly illustrated by two doctrines that are quite widely at variance with common sense, one in family law and the other in tort law.

Modern, gender-neutral American divorce law has accepted the principle that economic self-sufficiency should be the goal for both spouses after marriage comes to an end. This unrealistic principle leaves one large class of women, namely mothers, with fewer legal protections than they would have in most other countries at comparable levels of economic development. The United States is more lax than France and Germany in requiring former providers to fulfill their support obligations and less generous than the Nordic countries where public assistance to single mothers is concerned.

A second example concerns the American tort-law doctrine that a person has no legal duty to come to the aid of another person in peril, even if he can do so without harm to himself. The doctrine, as it exists in all but a handful of states, is so profoundly at odds with ordinary moral intuitions that it comes as a shock to most law students. Yet, unless persons have entered into a legally recognized relationship with one another, our tort law treats them as "strangers" having no duty to one another except to avoid the active infliction of harm. The terminology is telling: The drowning man and I are "strangers" rather than fellow citizens or fellow members of the human family. I have no legal obligation to toss him a lifeline.

The Romano-Germanic legal systems, by contrast, impose both civil and criminal penalties for a failure to rescue where the deed could have been accomplished without undue risk to the rescuer. The practical significance of this difference is small, for actual cases of failure to rescue rarely arise. But as a leading French scholar has pointed out, the chief importance of the legal duty to rescue is pedagogical: It is "to serve as a reminder that we are members of society and ought to act responsibly." By the same token, one might speculate that the chief importance of legal silence on this point in the United States is that it represents a lost opportunity to reinforce the sense of being part of a community for which all share a common responsibility.

In public law, there is a precise parallel to the absence of a duty to rescue, as illustrated in the 1989 case of *DeShaney v. Winnebago County,* where a little boy and his mother sued a state social-services department for the brain damage he suffered after state agents failed to remove him from the home of his violent father in whose custody they had placed him. The Supreme Court affirmed the denial of liability in that case, saying that the Constitution imposes no duty on

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government to protect the health and welfare of its citizens, "even where such aid may be necessary to secure life, liberty or property interests of which the government itself may not deprive the individual."

In another such case, where police negligently failed to remove a man from a burning automobile, lawyers argued that the constitutional right not to be "deprived of life, liberty or property without due process of law" included the right to receive basic services from the state. But that claim of a positive right was shot down by Judge Richard Posner of the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals in no uncertain terms: "The problem with this argument is that the Constitution is a charter of negative rather than positive liberties. . . . The men who wrote the Bill of Rights were not concerned that government might do too little *for* the people, but that it might do too much *to* them."

The most significant countervailing example to the individualistic themes I have emphasized is probably that of our country's social-assistance programs. Yet even in the social-welfare area, an ingrained ideal of self-sufficiency shows its power by fostering a certain institutionalized disdain for persons who cannot be self-sufficient. That disdain for dependency may well explain why social assistance is so often offered grudgingly and administered disrespectfully.

In recent years, proposals have emerged that are more consistent with our traditions of generosity. Various initiatives would test the proposition that many social services could be delivered more efficiently, effectively, and humanely through the intermediate institutions of civil society, including faith-based institutions, than by the government. But the prospects for such programs are uncertain. In many places, hyper-individualistic understandings of religious freedom have blocked these experiments or impeded their progress. Moreover, as Pope Benedict XVI pointed out in his first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*, there is a risk that the religious institutions participating in such programs will relinquish or be forced to relinquish their distinctive character.

Happily, in the United States, our practice is often better than our theory. But theoretical concepts can wreak havoc on good practices when they migrate from their proper context into everyday life. The American framers' concept of the human person, though incomplete from a philosophical or anthropological point of view, was not inappropriate for the limited purpose of designing a federal framework within which civic life could flourish under conditions of ordered liberty. What needs to be kept in sight (but unfortunately is too often forgotten) is that the liberal principles enshrined in the United States' founding documents were *political* principles that were never meant to serve as moral guides for all of social and private life. Those principles, with their encoded image of the free, self-determining individual, grounded important and lasting political achievements: the establishment of a republic with democratic elements, the protection of liberty, and the promotion of individual initiative. Moreover, I believe a convincing case can be made that the Constitution contains implicit principles of subsidiarity that could have fostered the development of stronger moral and juridical foundations for the American version of the democratic experiment. But the concept of subsidiarity is little understood in the United States, whereas the tendency to think in terms of individual, state, and market without intermediaries is very strong.

The framers understood perfectly well that the success of the democratic experiment would depend on the habits and attitudes of the citizenry, but they relied on social, rather than legal, norms and institutions to inculcate the necessary qualities. Their vision for America was that of a people "free by the laws, and restrained by the manners" (as Montesquieu once described the English). But, as the population expanded and became more diverse and mobile, common understandings grew thinner, and national law assumed more importance as a repository of common values.

With the expansion of federal power in the twentieth century and the corresponding limitation of the power of state and local governments, the ability of citizens to have a say in shaping those values has diminished. In the latter half of the twentieth century, the Supreme Court removed a great many issues from ordinary local democratic political processes. Initially, this was done to protect racial minorities. But, in later cases, such as those involving abortion, education, and religion, courts drastically restricted the rights of citizens in general, and parents in particular, to help establish, through legislation, the conditions under which they live, work, and raise their children. This experience in the United States should serve as a cautionary example for other nations.

With the growing influence of legal—as distinct from social—norms, the flaws in legal concepts of personhood began to be more problematic, as did the founders' silence regarding matters they had taken for granted or left up to the states (the family, the common good, the responsibilities that are correlative with rights). Ideas that had been useful for the purpose of establishing limited government began to pervade social discourse, to the detriment of the cultural supports on which a liberal democratic regime depends. Decreasingly tempered by social norms, legal structures designed to channel human energy into the

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pursuit of private satisfactions may have fostered materialism and personal alienation, discouraging active citizenship.

By embracing the notion of individual autonomy as fully as it has, and by ignoring or downgrading healthy forms of interdependence, the U.S. legal system may have rendered our society less hospitable to the weak, the vulnerable, and the dependent—as well as to those who care for them. Certainly it has distanced legal norms from the lives that many Americans are struggling to live. There is often, as Charles Taylor has observed, "a lack of fit between what people officially and consciously believe, even pride themselves on believing, on the one hand, and what they need in order to make sense of some of their moral reactions, on the other."

I would not wish to be understood as devaluing the sturdy self-reliance and freedom-loving individualism that is so much a part of American culture. The concern I have expressed here is that the ascendancy of law as a carrier of common values has promoted the spread of hyper-libertarian, ultra-individualist ideas that can undermine the very conditions that are essential for the maintenance of a free republic.

The best hope for an eventual correction, I would suggest, resides in that aspect of human personhood to which John Paul II referred in the conclusion to his great encyclical *Fides et Ratio*: "I ask everyone to look more deeply at man, whom Christ has saved in the mystery of his love, and at the human being's unceasing search for truth and meaning. Different philosophical systems have lured people into believing that they are their own absolute master, able to decide their own destiny and future in complete autonomy, trusting only in themselves and their own powers. But this can never be the grandeur of the human being."

The authors of the *Federalist Papers*, for all their misgivings about human nature, would not have written those essays explaining the new Constitution to the public if they did not believe that human beings are engaged in an "unceasing search for truth and meaning." They would not have appealed to reason if they did not believe their fellow citizens were capable of making reasoned judgments. The ability of men and women to reflect on their existence, to make judgments concerning the good life, to review those judgments in the light of reason and experience, and to take responsibility for their decisions is one on which all successful legal systems depend. That human capacity for reflection and responsible choice is what makes the difference between being carried along by events and being able to shift probabilities in a more favorable direction. It is what enables us to use legal, economic, sociological, and political concepts for what they are worth without becoming their slaves. FT

Nine Bells

God in His mercy gave
the heavens as a clock
to sailors he would save.

Driven by wind and wave,
I steer for Peter's rock
and moor within his nave,

seeking the faith to brave
my first mate in a smock
and sawbones looking grave.

Timothy Murphy

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Balthasar, Hell, and Heresy: An Exchange

Alyssa Lyra Pitstick / Edward T. Oakes, S.J.

Alyssa Lyra Pitstick

Hans Urs von Balthasar once keenly observed what makes someone an *ecclesial* theologian: "It is quite clear that anyone who practices theology as a member of the Church must profess the Church's Creed (and the theology implicit in it), both formally and materially. This profession is made formally, by positing the ecclesial *act* of faith; materially, by accepting the ecclesial *contents* of the faith."

In other words, what ecclesial theologians say should reflect the beliefs they hold and those beliefs are to be the ones held by the ecclesial community. In virtue of their common profession, the theologian bears a name in common with the preexisting community of faith. This ecclesial relation suggests why the community can correct and even censure members who reject its common doctrine. Both formal and material professions serve as a lamp to guide and correct the work of the ecclesial theologian with the light of faith—and to enlighten any adequate evaluation of that work. For Catholics (like Balthasar), the definitive profession is expressed in Scripture, tradition, and the Church's Magisterium as these are inseparably united.

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What then are we to think when Balthasar himself radically reinterprets a perennial doctrine of his ecclesial community, the doctrine of Christ's descent into hell? When he retains the form in its general expression but changes the content to the point of contradicting the original?

Balthasar is counted among the most influential theologians of the past century, being widely read and respected. Only his unexpected death, three days before the ceremony, prevented him from being made a cardinal by Pope John Paul II. By reputation, he is generally considered a conservative theologian. He wrote a book about how important it was to him to be Catholic. Of all people, one might reasonably expect Balthasar to qualify as an ecclesial theologian. But does he meet his own criteria?

It is a question asked reluctantly; however, the doctrine in question is by no means marginal to Christian faith: The mystery of Holy Saturday stands with Good Friday and Easter Sunday at the center of Christ's redemptive work. What one believes of Christ's descent into hell necessarily affects what one believes about Christ and salvation through him. The contrast between Balthasar's theology of Holy Saturday and the traditional Catholic doctrine confronts us with the grave but necessary question whether the work of a theologian so reputably Catholic is in fact compatible with the Catholic faith.

Traditionally, Christ's descent has been seen as the beginning of the manifestation of his triumph over death and the first application of the fruits of redemption. Gloriously descending to the souls of the holy men and women who had died before him, Christ

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bestowed on them the glory of heaven and the fullness of freedom. He did not suffer in hell; rather, in virtue of his redemptive death on the cross, he opened to the holy souls the gates of heaven that had been closed due to sin. Notable for its ancient origin and the unusual consistency of its profession, this doctrine of a triumphal descent is part of the heritage of all Christians. It was held universally in both Christian East and West until the Protestant Reformation; the Catholic Church and the Orthodox have continued to profess it without interruption.

Balthasar argues, however, that this doctrine does not do justice to the depths to which Christ went for man's redemption or, consequently, to his love. Rather, Christ must have suffered after death the full force of what would have awaited sinful mankind without a redeemer: complete rejection by the Father without hope of mercy or reconciliation. By descending into this utter abandonment, Christ bore the punishment humanity deserved, thereby manifesting the extreme extent of God's love. Balthasar agrees that Christ's descent should be called glorious, but in the sense that Christ's crucifixion, rather than his resurrection, is said to be his glory. Balthasar thus retains the form of the profession of faith but with a content other than the traditional one of his ecclesial community. Like the Catholic Church, Balthasar professes *Christ descended into hell*, but he means something radically different.

Balthasar had acknowledged the act of faith as normative in both its formal and material aspects. How then could he, a man of such Catholic repute and enormous intellectual gifts, have set forth the material content of the verbal profession so differently?

Certainly the definitive answer is known only by God, who sees the heart. But four possible explanations of a more general and accessible character suggest themselves: (1) Balthasar was ignorant of the content of the Church's profession, (2) he knew it but did not think it was normative, (3) he knew it was normative and saw his own as a development of it, or (4) he knew it was normative but nonetheless proposed something else in its place. We may legitimately ask which explanation is most fitting in order to consider whether Balthasar's doctrine is a product of ecclesial theology.

The first possibility is untenable: Balthasar's biographers compete for superlatives to describe his intelligence and extensive reading in literature and theology, and Balthasar himself discusses or alludes to the traditional Catholic doctrine in several places.

The second possible explanation, that Balthasar did not think the material profession was normative, also seems unsustainable. Balthasar knew what the traditional doctrine was, while his biographers and those who knew him personally stress his lifelong concern to be an ecclesial thinker. An original thinker, yes, but a maverick or dissenter, no. His observation that the allegiance of faith pertains both to its form and its content was written in the final years of his life and does not appear to reflect a change in his consciousness of the theologian's responsibility.

Might it be, then, that Balthasar knew that the Church's explication was normative but saw his own as a development of it? Surely it does the most justice to Balthasar as a noted scholar and a professed Catholic to examine his work based on this assumption. Let us look then at the doctrine and Balthasar's proposed development in more detail.

The traditional doctrine of Christ's descent into hell can be summarized by four points:

- The sinless human soul of Christ, united to his divine person, descended only to the realm of the dead reserved for the souls of holy individuals, called the limbo of the fathers. *Hell*, as any abode of the dead other than heaven, has progressively lost the breadth of meaning it once had, and much confusion about Christ's descent is due to this fact of linguistic history. Historically, *hell* could refer to any or all of the following: the hell of eternal punishment, purgatory, the limbo of the fathers, or the limbo of the children. (The limbo of the children—today just called limbo and the subject of some theological controversy—would be the eternal abode of those individuals who died without personal sin but also without the grace of justification; in contrast, those liberated from the limbo of the fathers had received that grace.) If, then, Catholics profess *Christ descended into hell*, we must ask which "hell" the Catholic Church intends. Catholic teaching has consistently and unambiguously held that Christ descended in soul only to the limbo of the fathers. For the sake of those who are squeamish of talking about separated souls being in places, we may say just as well that Christ's soul joined the company of other holy souls.
- He then liberated the just from the limbo of the fathers, conferring on them the glory of heaven. Having accomplished mankind's redemption in the blood of his cross, Christ distributed the first fruit of his sacrifice.
- In doing so, his power and authority were made known to all the dead, both good and evil, and to the demons.
- Because Christ descended in his sinless soul as the all-holy redeemer, his descent was glorious in a way similar to his resurrection, and he did not suffer in hell.

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Although this traditional doctrine of Christ's descent has not been defined by an ecumenical council in resolution of controversy or proclaimed in an extraordinary manner by papal authority, it has consistently been held as an authentic and authoritative doctrine of Catholic faith. To doubt that would be to doubt not only the testimony of history but also the authority of tradition itself and of the Church's ordinary Magisterium. The doctrine is expressed in Scripture; in papal statements, conciliar documents, and other forms of magisterial teaching such as official catechisms; in the creeds; in the diverse eastern and western liturgies; in the consensus of the Church Fathers, the doctors of the Church, and the saints; and in the *sensus fidelium* expressed in sacred art. The elements of the doctrine go back to apostolic and patristic times, attain particular systematic integrity in the scholastic period, are reaffirmed as Catholic doctrine in response to the challenge of the new Protestant doctrines of the Reformation, and are reiterated in the present day in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

Balthasar proposes notable changes to this doctrine. He rejects the idea of the limbo of the fathers, holding instead that Christ descended to the place (or state) of eternal punishment. Balthasar prefers to call this abode Sheol rather than hell, in part because he holds that Sheol is something worse than hell. There, Christ suffers the fate of unredeemed mankind: complete rejection by the Father. The Father's rejection is just, since Christ is "literally 'made sin'" in Sheol. Balthasar thinks that sin is something like a substantial reality due to the energy invested in it by the sinner. This idea has been criticized elsewhere for philosophical reasons, but merely to illustrate it here we might say that, by sinning, a person not only forfeits the good he might otherwise have become but also perverts that potentially positive part of his reality into something negative. Existing as a sort of immaterial reality, sins can be separated from sinners and actually transferred to Christ during his passion. Thus, he logically must suffer their full punishment if they are to be expiated.

The full significance of this burden is apprehended in Sheol. In place of the *visio Dei*, Christ has a *visio mortis* as he contemplates the repulsive horror and self-isolation of sin's selfishness. Balthasar stresses that Sheol is not a place, however, but a condition and thus an intimate spiritual reality. Hence, just as a soul is united to God through the beatific vision (the *visio Dei*), so likewise Christ, in virtue of his *visio mortis*, does not merely "see" sin objectively outside himself but is subjectively united and conformed to it: He is "*literally* 'made sin.'" Or, what is the same, sin becomes embodied (technically, *enhypostasized*) in the Son. The Father's rejection of *sin* thus takes the form of his abandonment of the *Son* in Sheol beneath the crushing weight of divine wrath against evil. Hence, Christ's agony does not cease after his death but rather increases as he suffers the pain of eternal punishment. Despite the limited time his body lay in the tomb, Christ experiences the Father's abandonment as eternal, both because such timelessness is essential to the punishment of unredeemed sin and because his suffering must embrace all time if it is to atone for the sins of all time.

As the Son of God, however, Jesus had a unique intimacy with the Father. Consequently, the Father's rejection is far worse for Christ than for other men. It is, Balthasar says, proportional to the divine love between the Father and the Son. Christ's agony in Sheol thus is immeasurably greater than the punishment of hell for any and all other sinners: Through the *visio mortis*, he is conformed to what is contrary to himself, the anti-divine reality of sin; he is rejected by the Father in proportion to his filial intimacy; and he undergoes this wrath on behalf of all sinners, suffering for each and every one of their sins.

Christ can undergo all this only because he is divine. As he is conformed to all sin, his human nature is "shattered" in Sheol by "a certain 'stretching apart' . . . which remains physiologically indescribable." Just as Balthasar thinks that, in order to become human, the Son actually left behind with the Father divine attributes such as omniscience, so even this attenuated humanity of Christ's will ultimately be stripped away. His descent thus is a conflict between the substantial love of God and the substantial selfishness of sin:

> With the removal of the whole superstructure of the Incarnation, the eternal will of the Son within the Trinity to obedience is exposed . . . as the substructure that is the basis of the entire event of the Incarnation: and this is set face-to-face with the hidden substructure of sinful existence, exposed in Sheol. . . . Now it is precisely this face-to-face confrontation between the "naked" God and "naked" sin that shows that Jesus' solidarity even with the utter lostness of sinners presupposes the uniqueness of his condition [that is, his filial divinity].

In this way—and only in this way, Balthasar insists—is redemption possible: For sin is brought inside the Son when he is literally made sin in Sheol; thus it is brought into the relationship between the Son and the Father; and thus it is finally brought into

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the love between them, the Holy Spirit. Despite the sin and wrath they experience, each divine person continues to give himself to the other two out of love. In this way, the trinitarian love engulfs sin, thereby destroying it. Christ's descent into hell is glorious because God's invincible (or "ever greater") love is revealed in the very conditions that present the greatest resistance to it.

Balthasar's doctrine differs so strikingly from the Catholic tradition's on so many essential points one wonders what elements are retained that might qualify it as a development. True, *Christ* descends to hell—though not exactly the Christ of Catholic tradition, for, according to Balthasar, Christ descends not so much in his human soul united to his divine person but ultimately in his divinity alone: Christ's humanity is "stretched" until "the whole superstructure of the Incarnation" is stripped away. The Son descends to *hell*—though not to the abode for holy souls, but rather to Balthasar's Sheol. The Son's descent is *glorious*—though not as the tradition has it, with Christ's sinless human soul manifesting itself in a glory like that of his imminent resurrection and conferring the beatific vision on the holy dead but rather with the "glory" of the divine love persisting despite its internal embrace of sin. Christ's *power and authority are manifested* in the realm of the dead and a way to heaven is made open—though not in the way these things were understood to have been done from the time of the early Church.

The disparity between the two doctrines is manifest also in their different soteriological roles. In Balthasar's theology, Christ's descent is expiatory rather than being the first application of the fruit of salvation. Also, the passivity of Christ's suffering in Sheol differs from the authoritative action traditionally ascribed to him. Moreover, the received Catholic theological tradition holds that Christ's death on the cross was satisfactory in virtue of the preeminent qualities of his person, that is, his divine excellence and his perfect charity. In contrast, Balthasar's soteriology of Christ's descent depends on quantitative penal substitution: In the place of all sinners, Christ suffers the punishment for all sins. Humanity is redeemed by Christ's cross insofar as the guilt of all sins is actually transferred to him there, but these sins remain to be expiated in Sheol through his suffering their punishment in place of the sinners who deserved it.

In short, it is difficult to see Balthasar's theology of Christ's descent as a development of the traditional Catholic doctrine. He retains the formula *Christ gloriously descended into hell* but invests it with a radically different meaning, maintaining the formal profession while replacing the material profession. Thus, contrary to all expectation, it seems we are left with no choice but the fourth possible: Balthasar knew the traditional material profession as normative but nonetheless proposed something else in its place.

In fact, examination of Balthasar's theology reveals that his doctrine is largely original to him. Although he generally attempts to present it as a rereading of historical sources, one finds he ignores or rejects the most widespread and authoritative of such. His selected pre-Reformation sources generally are ambiguous, open to readings consistent with the tradition, not authoritative, or used not only out of context but also against their context. The source with most telling influence on Balthasar is Adrienne von Speyr, a woman under his spiritual direction and a convert from Protestantism, while the seminal idea that Christ suffered in some way during his descent may be traced back to Nicholas of Cusa and the doctrinal heirs of his proposal, Martin Luther and especially John Calvin.

The *unity of faith* and the *nexus mysteriorum* are just two ways to describe the fact that the mysteries of Christ's life, death, and resurrection are all knit together. The work of God in Christ is a seamless garment. To change the profession, formal or material, of one mystery will ultimately have a ripple effect through all. Balthasar's essentially new doctrine of Christ's descent raises the question whether one can still believe in the Christ professed by one's ecclesial community if one consciously rejects the descent it professes, just as the same question would be raised if one rejected Christ's resurrection, his incarnation, the Trinity, or any other article of the creed. In fact, we have seen that the Christ whom Balthasar proposes descended into Sheol is not the same Christ whom the pre-Reformation and Catholic tradition professes descended to the limbo of the fathers.

Also at issue is the authority of the tradition that specifies the material contents of the formal act of faith. This matter is brought to the fore in theologies of Christ's descent, because the descent occurred beyond the reach of any eye and hence can be approached only on the basis of faith and its submission to *revealed* truth. The most explicit scriptural testimony is obscure, however, while the invocation of other passages to clarify those texts is already dependent on a tradition of interpretation and belief. Hence, necessarily, either one relies on Christian tradition as a sure guide to God's revelation—or one rejects such tradition in whole or in part.

The consequences of rejection give pause. If tradition is necessary, then without it theology becomes subjected to fallen reason's fancy—and unaided reason ultimately cannot fail to err in a subject matter so

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beyond its capabilities. Like all the mysteries of faith, Christ's descent into hell is an endlessly rich source for theological reflection. Nonetheless, its character as a mystery does not preclude certain things being affirmed as true and others being denied as false. Though the fullness of the mysteries of faith transcends human reasoning, God revealed these mysteries not to confound the human intellect but that we might know the truth about him in order to love and serve him as his holy people.

Then, too, as Balthasar had said, the ecclesial theologian adheres to the creed's implicit theology, that is, to the community's reasoned understanding of its belief as this consensus has been transmitted through history. The Church's tradition is implicit in her formal profession of faith; since tradition specifies what the words have meant to the believing community, it *is* the material content. If the verbal formula exists for the sake of conveying its content, then the words alone are insufficient for ecclesial communion. In other words, since words are significant for their meaning, to reject the material content of profession is identical to rejecting the belief the community has handed down, which is to reject the community formed by common belief and consequently to separate oneself from that community—even if, all the while, one retains the verbal formula.

Unfortunately, regardless of the openness with which one reads Balthasar's works or the sympathy one may have for him personally, it is undeniable that his theology of Christ's descent entails a *de facto*, and sometimes even conscious, rejection of Catholic tradition. Thus, Balthasar's work fails to adhere to an essential element of Catholic ecclesial theology and its standard of truth. Indeed, he contradicts it on a matter central to the gospel of redemption and to Christian faith. Confronted with this curious circumstance of an admired theologian whose work stands in opposition to the faith of his professed ecclesial community, even the most respectful inquiry would have to conclude, however reluctantly, that something went gravely awry in Balthasar's execution of the task of ecclesial theologian.

Edward T. Oakes, S.J.

Hans Urs von Balthasar is a disturbing theologian. Even among some of his most vocal enthusiasts, he seems "not quite right." Nor has this diffidence been much assuaged by John Paul II's evident admiration for the theologian, shown most incontrovertibly when the pontiff named him a cardinal in 1988. Nor are the anxiously orthodox much allayed by Pope Benedict XVI's praise of him in October 2005, on the occasion of the hundreth anniversary of his birth. And surely the central reason for that uneasiness is—despite his self-proclaimed orthodoxy—Balthasar's claim that Christ descended into the depths of hell in order to rescue, at least potentially, *all* those "spirits in prison who disobeyed God long ago" (1 Pet. 3:20).

Alyssa Pitstick claims that this thesis directly contradicts the limpid and always consistent teaching of the Magisterium on the mystery of Holy Saturday, which perhaps finds its clearest and most univocal formulation in this sentence from the recently promulgated *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: "Jesus did not descend into hell to deliver the damned, nor to destroy the hell of damnation, but to free the just who had gone before him."

To be sure, this version of the *Catechism* was published after Balthasar died, and so he cannot be blamed for dissenting from that particular sentence, at least as formally taught. But that is not much of a defense, for the sentence was evidently formulated with him in mind. We know this because Christoph Cardinal Schönborn (archbishop of Vienna and chairman of the drafting committee of the *Catechism*) said so: "The brief paragraph on Jesus' descent into hell keeps to what is the common property of the Church's exegetical tradition. Newer interpretations, such as that of Hans Urs von Balthasar (on the contemplation of Holy Saturday), however profound and helpful they may be, have not yet experienced that reception which would justify their inclusion in the Catechism."

Admittedly, Schönborn does provide here a certain amount of room for discussing Balthasar's apparently revolutionary theology of Holy Saturday, and he even leaves open the possibility that it might later become part of the Church's orthodox teaching. This is a prospect that the *Catechism* itself seems to point to, for it asserts that "the Church prays that no one should be lost. . . . If it is true that no one can save himself, it is also true that God 'desires all men to be saved' (1 Tim. 2:4) and that for God 'all things are possible' (Matt. 19:26)." With *that* passage, Balthasar would certainly agree, only adding that it is both a logical and a psychological impossibility to pray for something for which there is antecedently no hope—a hope that for him can be justified only in the love of Christ that is victorious even over hell.

I do not know if Pitstick holds with St. Augustine that hope for universal redemption is antecedently impossible, but she certainly insists that Balthasar's own way of providing theological grounds for that hope contradicts Church teaching. In her reading, the Church has recognized only a *glorious* entrance by Christ into hell, and since glory is antithetical to dark-

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ness, Christ therefore did not—or rather could not—suffer in true hell, the place of the damned, where only darkness reigns. Thus Christ descended into hell solely to redeem those located in the so-called limbo of the fathers.

Frankly, I dispute her tendentious reading of the tradition. Back in his days as Joseph Ratzinger, the future Pope Benedict wrote a book called *Eschatology*, where he faced this issue directly:

> God himself suffered and died.... He himself entered into the distinctive freedom of sinners, but he went beyond it in that freedom of his own love which descended willingly into the Abyss. Here the real quality of evil and its consequences become quite palpable, provoking the question... whether in this event we are not in touch with a divine response able to draw freedom, precisely as freedom, to itself. The answer lies hidden in Jesus' descent into Sheol, in the night of the soul which he suffered, a night no one can observe except by entering this darkness in suffering faith.... It is a challenge to suffer in the dark night of faith, to experience communion with Christ in solidarity with his descent into the Night. One draws near to the Lord's radiance by sharing his darkness.

The parallels with Balthasar's theology here are more than obvious, which Ratzinger makes even more explicit in the afterword to the English edition, written in 1987 during his tenure as prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. In this afterword, he praises Balthasar's trilogy as a "great triptych" and singles out for special laudation the last volume of *Theo-Drama* (the one specifically devoted to this theme) for "its profound analysis of the essence of Christian hope, the pain of God, judgment and consummation." Indeed, he goes further and raises the large claim that this final volume "makes a foundational contribution to a deepening of the theme of eschatology."

I am not trying to give retroactive infallibility to these lines simply because they happen to have been written by a future pope. But they certainly do show that Balthasar's theology of Christ's descent into hell has entered into the thinking of the highest reaches of the Church's Magisterium. Pitstick, however, labors under the impression that Balthasar's views are so *outré* and bizarre that they even call into question the honesty of his professed desire to be regarded as an orthodox Catholic theologian.

Of course, his views are not right just because they have more theological warrant than Pitstick wants to grant. Balthasar's theology is not without problems. When one of Ludwig Wittgenstein's graduate students allowed how much he regretted the Church's condemnation of Origen's doctrine that God would eventually abolish hell and redeem the whole world (including the devils), the philosopher shot back: "Of course it was rejected. It would make nonsense of everything else. If what we do now is to make no difference in the end, then all the seriousness of life is done away with." And in his book *A Rumor of Angels*, the sociologist and Lutheran writer Peter Berger insists that "the argument from damnation" points to a world beyond this one: We all feel, Berger argues, that certain crimes are so wanton that no punishment, not even execution or life in prison, could suffice for justice to be done. In other words, there can be no theodicy without hell, no genuinely transcendent justice without eternal damnation. If the drama of salvation is to be a divine comedy, and not just a hollow, sick, and empty existentialist joke, it has to include an inferno.

But such objections, worries, and demurrals are one thing; Alyssa Pitstick's full-bore attacks on Balthasar quite another. To start with, her reading of the tradition insists that Sheol (the vaguely conceived underworld of the Hebrew imagination) was pre-differentiated, so to speak, into various regions. Ancient views of the underworld, whether from the Old Testament, Homer, or other pre-Christian sources, were undoubtedly vague. But that vagueness for her was due to the darkness of minds that had not yet received the fullness of revelation.

That, however, is an epistemological point. The various regions had already been divided up into impermeable sections, however unbeknownst to pre-Christians. In her view, before the coming of Christ on earth, the underworld already consisted of (1) a hell of the damned, to which Christ did not go; and (2) a limbo of the just ones, where Christ went to free these antecedently just souls from their (presumably unjust?) captivity. Indeed, in her forthcoming book, though not in her article here, she actually goes so far as to identify this pre-Christian limbo with the Catholic concept of purgatory—a strange innovation on the tradition coming from such an *über*-traditionalist as herself. (With the exception of Cato the Younger, all the denizens of Dante's *Purgatorio* are baptized Christians, and even Cato is placed in what Dante called "ante-purgatory," from which he never ascends into purgatory proper.)

Because Pitstick's reading of the tradition is so monochromatic, she is forced to trace the provenance of Balthasar's apparently *recherché* views not to the Bible, and certainly not to tradition, but to such figures

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as German cardinal Nicholas of Cusa, Martin Luther, and John Calvin. Because she seems to regard that genealogy as probative merely by mentioning it, I gather she disapproves of Protestant influence on Catholic theologians—and we have already learned that a theologian's status as a cardinal clearly cuts no ice with her. But in response to her implied accusations of Lutheran and Calvinist influence, I will up the Protestant ante even further. In my reading, the strongest Protestant influence on Balthasar was not Luther or Calvin but Karl Barth, who gets no mention in either Pitstick's article or her new book.

In Balthasar's view, Barth was the first theologian in the history of Christian thought who found a way of reconciling St. Paul's theology of the atonement with Luther's and Calvin's (and Augustine's) theory of predestination. He did this by showing that the entirety of God's foreordained decree for the human race—whether to save or to damn—came to focus *first* and above all on his Son, who submitted himself to God's reprobation. And since reprobation is what brought hell into being in the first place, Barth is led to this conclusion:

> It is a serious matter to be threatened by hell, sentenced to hell, worthy of hell, and already on the road to hell. On the other hand, we must not minimize the fact that we actually know of only one certain triumph of hell—the handing-over of Jesus—and that this triumph of hell took place in order that it would never again be able to triumph over anyone. We must not deny that Jesus gave Himself up into the depths of hell not only with many others but on their behalf, in their place.

Pitstick would no doubt regard this passage as equally dubious—and certainly at least as much in conflict with previous Church tradition—as anything that Balthasar might have written. To which I think he would respond: If one is going to object to Barth here, one is not so much objecting to the Reformers as to St. Paul. As anyone who has read his influential book on Barth knows, Balthasar did not subscribe to Luther's notion of a merely forensic justification, whereby we gain access to heaven by faith alone, a faith which tells us we have been acquitted in God's courtroom, as it were, by a kind of legal fiction, even while we continue to stay stuck in the same mire of sin as before. But for Balthasar, even if the Reformers went awry here, at least they took St. Paul seriously, and ecumenical discussion will go nowhere in his view unless both sides return to a serious reexamination of Paul on his own terms.

In other words, the whole point of Balthasar's book on Barth was not to make Luther or Calvin canonical authorities for Catholic theology (nor, of course, to rule them out of bounds either, in the manner of Pitstick, just for being Protestant). Rather, he wanted to bring Paul's doctrine of atonement back into the center of Catholic debate, especially these verses: "For our sake God made him [Christ] to be sin, who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21), and "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by being cursed in our stead" (Gal. 3:13).

I think I can explain Balthasar's interpretation of these passages by citing a remark from St. Anselm, the medieval Benedictine who became the archbishop of Canterbury in the twelfth century. He shocked his fellow monks at a colloquy one day when he told them that he would rather God condemn him to hell, even if he had committed no sins, than that he be allowed into heaven with the soil of sin still staining his soul. No doubt Anselm was speaking here, as was his wont, of what God "has to be" by definition: that is, the All-Holy, who by nature cannot admit sin into his presence. But, however unawares, he was also making a christological point. For could the persons of the Trinity be less willing to follow such a logic than was a medieval monk? Has not Anselm inadvertently expressed the Trinity's own reasons for the incarnation? Do we not now see why a merely forensic view of justification will ultimately break down logically?

In the face of this logic, and above all in her studied refusal to come to terms with Paul's theology (even quite independently of Reformation theology), Pitstick has only one option left, and she takes it: In her book, she says quite openly that "tradition" (meaning of course *her* tradition) trumps all of Scripture, and not just St. Paul:

> Although little attention has been paid to ascertaining the original intentions of the human authors [of the Bible], and developments in theological precision have not been discussed, as [is] typical in contemporary Scriptural exegesis, the premise for this procedure is simple: All the authors considered desired to speak the truth God has revealed and confided to His Church. They themselves would have been the first to desire their words be used and interpreted in accord with the faith of the Church, especially in those cases where they did not see the truth as fully or clearly as those who followed them. This having been said, the texts employed for this chapter were selected for their clarity and orthodoxy.

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This procedure is an example, I believe, of what is called the argument from desperation. For one thing, it contradicts Church teaching. Vatican II's decree on revelation, *Dei Verbum*, explicitly asserts that the "teaching office of the Church is not above the word of God, but serves it," and Pius XII solemnly taught that the inspired meaning of the sacred text is located in the *original* intent of each author, which can be determined only by looking at each author's unique historical context.

One is left to wonder if Pitstick has preselected her passages because she suspects other passages of their unorthodoxy. Granted, some passages in the Bible might lack clarity—but orthodoxy too? She avoids Paul's Letter to the Romans as if it were radioactive—and no wonder, because nearly every line of that epistle can be brought in to refute her thesis of a pre-Christian purgatory. For it is precisely Paul's point in Romans that *no one is just in the sight of God after the first sin of Adam*.

Presumably the denizens of the Pitstickian purgatory would be Jews who obeyed the Mosaic law or pagans who kept the natural law—or, if they failed in their legal duties, somehow managed to repent before death, though they would had to have done so without benefit of knowing the cross of Christ by which those sins would have been known as sins. But for Paul, obedience to either law is irrelevant, since Jew and pagan are equally guilty, and precisely because their knowledge of obeying the law brings knowledge of their true sinfulness: "All men, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin. . . . For no human being will be justified in God's sight by works of the law, since through the law comes knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:9b, 20).

As to Pitstick's odd notion of a pre-Christian purgatory, one must recall Thomas Aquinas' insistence that mortal and venial sins are not two different species of the genus "sin" the way birch and beech trees are equally trees. For St. Thomas, only mortal sin is sin in the true sense. This means that if Christ went down solely to purgatory (where only venial sins are purged, along with the lingering effects of forgiven mortal sins), then his atonement for sin—*real* sin—has been "emptied of its power" (1 Cor. 1:17). If I might put the matter in John Milton's mythological terms, what could prove more pleasing to Satan than to hear reports of a newfangled theology that claims his realm has been left intact, not invaded or broken into by the ruler of the universe? As Lucifer says of his new abode in the dungeons of Tartarus in book 1 of *Paradise Lost*:

> *Here at least*
> *We shall be free; the Almighty hath not built*
> *Here for his envy, will not drive us hence:*
> *Here we may reign secure; and in my choice*
> *To reign is worth ambition, though in Hell:*
> *Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven.*

My chief worry about Pitstick's position is not her totalizing attack on Balthasar. We are, after all, dealing with Christian theology's most crucial issue: God's intentions for the world. What worries me instead is that she seems to have an *alternative* vision of the gospel that would, in time, turn Good News into bad, hope into despair, trust into anxiety, and love into fear—and this despite John's admonition that "there is no fear in love, for perfect love drives out fear" (1 John 4:18).

The Beloved Disciple is obviously not encouraging sentimentality or moral laxity here, for two chapters earlier (at 2:1–2) he grounds that fear-expelling love not in wishy-washy liberalism or an avuncular indulgence of sin but in the entirely objective fact of universal redemption: "My little children, I am writing this to you so that you do not sin; but if any one does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Just One. He is the expiation for our sins, and not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world." FT

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Protestants and Natural Law

J. Daryl Charles

It is hard to make generalizations about Protestant theology, given the inherently splintered nature of Protestantism and the multiplicity of theological fads found within its borders. Nevertheless, people who otherwise have very little in common theologically are remarkably joined in their opposition to natural-law thinking. This opposition is found among both revisionists and those who are confessionally orthodox. Indeed, one is hard-pressed to name a single major figure in recent Protestant ethics who has developed and defended a theory of natural law.

Among more orthodox thinkers, objection to the natural law takes several forms. Many, Protestant evangelicals in particular, presume that natural-law thinking fails to take seriously the condition of human sin and places misguided trust in the powers of human reason debilitated by the Fall. Consequently, natural-law theory is thought to be insufficiently Christocentric and located outside the realm of grace, thereby engendering a version of works-righteousness. These critics remain skeptical out of a concern that natural law is autonomous and somehow external to the center of theological ethics and God's providential care of the world.

Because much of the bias against natural-law thinking is rooted in theological conviction, religiously grounded objections to natural law must be taken seriously. But the belief, however widespread, that natural-law thinking is insufficiently Christocentric and therefore detracts from divine grace is misguided. Nothing of the sort was believed by the early Church Fathers, the medieval fathers, or the Protestant Reformers. Indeed, Scripture presumes natural law as a realm of "common grace" that is accessible to all people by virtue of creation—hence, in St. Paul's terms, all are "without excuse" (Rom. 1:20).

However deeply entrenched the bias against natural-law thinking is among Protestant thinkers, it cannot be attributed to the Reformers of the sixteenth century themselves. While it is decidedly true that they championed a particular understanding of grace and faith, this was *not* to the exclusion of other vehicles of divine agency. Rather, they assumed that the natural law had a moral and theological place in their system.

The conventional stereotype of such theologians as Luther and Calvin is that, in their concern to stress the primacy of faith, Scripture, grace, and forensic justification, they cared little about—or effectively denied—the natural law of their Catholic counterparts. Natural-law thinking, however, is firmly ensconced in Luther's thought. In his 1525 treatise *How Christians Should Regard Moses*, he distinguishes the natural law from the law of Moses, with its historically conditioned components, stipulations, and illustrations for theocratic Israel. "If the Ten Commandments are to be regarded as Moses' law, then Moses came too late," Luther quips somewhat wryly, for "Moses agrees exactly with nature" and "what Moses commands is nothing new." And, he adds, Moses "also addressed himself to far too few people, because the Ten Commandments had spread over the whole world not only before Moses but even

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before Abraham and all the patriarchs. For even if a Moses had never appeared and Abraham had never been born, the Ten Commandments would have had to rule in all men from the very beginning, as they indeed did and still do."

The law that stands behind the Ten Commandments, according to Luther, "was in force prior to Moses from the beginning of the world and also among all the Gentiles." Indeed, he adds, "We will regard Moses as a teacher, but we will not regard him as our lawgiver—unless he agrees with both the New Testament and the natural law." And where the Mosaic law and the natural law are one, "there the law remains and is not abrogated externally." Luther's position is unambiguous: The moral norms that apply to all people, Christians and non-Christians, are the same. There are not two ethical standards that exist within the realm of divine revelation.

Luther adopts the basic definition of natural law set forth in Philip Melanchthon's commentary on Romans 2:15, for the natural law is "a common judgment to which all men alike assent, and therefore one which God has inscribed upon the soul of each man." "Everyone," observes Luther, "must acknowledge that what the natural law says is right and true." All carry along with them "in the depth of their hearts a living book which could give them quite adequate instruction about what they ought to do and not to do, how they ought to judge, and what ought to be accepted and rejected." There is no person who does not sense the effects of the natural law.

Luther is well aware of the common misperception among religiously minded people that "natural law" is presupposed by only "Christian" societies. To the contrary, he insists, it is verified by human experience that all nations and all cultures possess this rudimentary knowledge. The natural law "is written in the depth of the heart and cannot be erased." In fact, people bring this awareness, this natural moral sense, when they come into the world. Although this natural law was merely concretized through the Decalogue on Mount Sinai, nations knew of the moral realities behind these laws before the law formally was given to Israel.

In his treatise *Temporal Authority*, Luther deliberates over particular situations that require Christians to participate intelligibly with unbelievers in the public square. Two such situations that potentially involve believer and unbeliever are the unlawful seizure of private property and resolving financial debts. Luther exhorts his readers to use both "the law of love" and "the natural law." When love has no observable effect, however, natural law must be our guide, since it is that "with which all reason is filled." Societies, therefore, "should keep written laws subject to reason, from which they originally welled forth as from the spring of justice." If neither of the concerned parties is Christian, Luther notes, "then you may have them call in some other judge, and tell the obstinate one that they are acting contrary to God and natural law." Theologically, Luther is content to allow the natural law and righteousness that comes by faith to stand side by side. And he is representative of the Protestant Reformers as a whole, presupposing the natural law to be at work within all people and thus lodged at the core of Christian social ethics. Otherwise, one could not appeal to the human conscience.

Given the emphasis on divine sovereignty and human depravity in the *Institutes*, one would expect Calvin to have a dim view of natural law. But he is, in fact, keenly aware of St. Paul's argument in Romans that the Gentiles "show the work of the law written on their hearts." Calvin maintains the Thomistic assumption that man is by nature a "social animal" and therefore inclined, "from natural instinct, to preserve society." No civil order, he insists, is possible without just laws, the seeds of which are "implanted in the breasts of all" by a transcendent lawgiver. Moreover, these seeds remain unaffected by the vicissitudes of life; neither war nor catastrophe nor crime nor human disagreement can alter these moral intuitions, since nothing can destroy "the primary idea of justice."

In light of Calvin's attention to human depravity and the effects of sin on the human mind, one might be tempted to exclude natural revelation from Calvin's theological system. But to acknowledge the pervasiveness of sin and human depravity, for Calvin, is not to obliterate the rudimentary moral sense in each person: "We certainly cannot say that (the Gentiles) are altogether blind as to the rule of life. Nothing is more common than for men to be sufficiently instructed in right conduct by natural law." He acknowledges that, despite "man's perverted and degenerate nature," the image of God is not "totally annihilated and destroyed." Rather, "some sparks still shine" in human creation. The natural law is "that apprehension of the conscience which distinguishes sufficiently between just and unjust, and which deprives men of the excuse of ignorance while it proves them guilty by their own testimony."

Covenant and natural law function together in the political theology of Huldrych Zwingli (1484–1531) as a buttress against tyranny and a safeguard of the rights of the citizenry. Conjoined to the natural law, covenant furnishes the basis for civil obligations binding on all human beings and all societies. With the other Reformers, Zwingli believes that all human laws should conform to the natural law, which he understands to be the

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equivalent of "true religion"—"the knowledge, worship, and fear of the supreme deity." The "law of nature," as Zwingli perceives it, is set by God on the heart of man and confirmed by the grace of God through Christ. This internal light is owing to the work of God's Spirit in every person and strengthened only after conversion to Christ. Because of human depravity, Zwingli reasons, humans cannot act justly; hence, the necessity of the "law of nature" as the divine imprint on the human heart, allowing even pagan unbelievers basic knowledge of good and evil. Without this "restraining" influence on humans of the natural law, society would descend into anarchy. (Zwingli holds to the belief, distinctive to Swiss reformational polity, that only those rulers and magistrates who are God-fearers properly know the natural law.)

Zwingli's successor in Zurich, Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575), perhaps best known for his role in drafting the Second Helvetic Confession (1566), affirms in even more pronounced ways the "law of nature" as "an instruction of the conscience, and, as it were, a certain direction placed by God himself in the minds and hearts of men, to teach them what they have to do and what to eschew." This ability to reason morally comes from the Creator, who "both prompts and writes his judgments in the hearts and minds of men." Thereby, notes Bullinger, even the Gentiles possess a basic discernment between good and evil, so that the natural law functions in the same way as the written law, teaching us "justice, equity, and goodness" and having as its source God himself. "Among all men, at all times and of all ages," he writes, "the meaning and substances of the laws touching honesty, justice, and public peace is kept inviolable," and thus the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule have continuing significance.

Despite the significance of such early-modern natural-law thinkers as Francisco de Vitoria and Francisco Suarez, who protested injustices in the New World based on the natural law, and Hugo Grotius, considered the father of international law, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw a decline in claims of a transcendent source for morality. For social reformers, romanticists, revolutionaries, and enlightened despots—from Hobbes and Rousseau to the complete moral autonomy of reason in Kant and the skepticism of Hume—Enlightenment rationalism represents a break with moral tradition. "Nature" and "natural law" are thus set in opposition to the *civitas*. Hobbes denies what Aquinas had affirmed, that as social creatures we have a natural inclination toward the good of others. And with Kant, a person is subject to no laws other than those imposed by the self. Individual freedom thus renders impotent the natural law through its severance of law and morality, as well as through the noumenal and the phenomenal.

Through the twentieth century, Protestant theology generally mirrored the Enlightenment culture around it. Despite the cleavage between theological fundamentalists and progressives, objections to natural law have united most Protestants.

Few have argued more vehemently for a rejection of natural-law thinking than Karl Barth, whose examination of intellectual trends in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, particularly in his book *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century*, led him to conclude that modern society had embraced an "idealized" and "humanized" understanding of "nature." This romantic construal of nature, coupled with an increasing secularization of culture, as Barth saw it, blended easily into the core assumptions of Enlightenment thinking and a new humanism. What the spirit of the age demanded of Christianity was a "reasonable" religion, over against the dogma of a revealed, miraculous Christianity.

This emptying of the theistic core created, in Barth's view, an entirely different religion that had departed from the Christianity revealed through Christ and Scripture. The preoccupation with "nature" and "reason" prepared the way for a secularized humanism that empties Christian faith of its substance, undermines the absolute lordship of Christ, and facilitates the emergence of a "natural theology" that supplants Christocentric faith.

Thus, any theological or philosophical concept rooted in nature Barth viewed as aiming "to undertake the replacement of the command of the grace of God by a sovereign humanism or even barbarism." Natural theology functions as a Trojan horse inside the walls of Christendom, producing a sort of latent deism. The God of natural law cannot be the God of the Bible, for natural-law theory "creates an autonomous locus of moral reflection completely separate from the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. It does not take sin seriously and is overly optimistic about the human condition."

Not inconsequential was a heated debate about natural law that took place between Karl Barth and Emil Brunner during the mid-1940s. Brunner held that nature is normative: It "teaches" and "dictates." In a sinful world, he wrote in 1937, the "Law of Nature" must be carried out, by which he meant the order of creation. In *Justice and the Social Order*, written at the end of the Second World War, Brunner observes that "justice transcends human caprice and convention"; it is "a valid standard of sacred authority." In fact, he argues, if the idea of justice had "remained faithful to its

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Christian form" and to "the law of nature," the great breach in the development of law and the state would not have occurred.

The debate between Barth and Brunner is illustrative, for it captures the fundamental disagreement that persists to this day between Roman Catholics and Protestants. The critical question is whether basic moral truths are present and operative within fallen human beings *by nature*, and thus whether human beings can be held accountable for their actions.

The historic Christian tradition answers yes, but Protestant theology is riddled with suspicion and skepticism about natural-law theory—much of it Barthian, but not all. Another species of opposition to natural-law thinking grounds itself in what it believes to be "radical obedience" to the biblical witness to Jesus. Perhaps the most persuasive representative of this view is Anabaptist theologian John Howard Yoder, whose well-known work *The Politics of Jesus* argues that the authentic Christian social ethic is rooted in a radical understanding of Jesus' teaching—and a particular reading of the Sermon on the Mount.

In seeking to understand the political order theologically, Yoder believes that two dominant interpretations have clouded our thinking. One rests on the "catholic" concept of natural law, which presumes an overly optimistic view of human nature and capacity for divine revelation. The other, the "Augustinian-reformed" version, entails "necessary compromise" with "the powers" for the purpose of "preservation." Both of these, Yoder insists, are "unacceptable."

Undergirding much of Yoder's work is the assumption that the early Church wrongly absorbed pagan philosophical influence—for example, the Stoic emphasis on reason and the law of nature—which allowed it, by Ambrose and Augustine's day, to be compromised by the political powers. Christian ethics, according to Yoder, evolved in such a way as to justify Christian presence and participation in the Roman imperium; hence, the need for a "radical critique of Constantinianism." The history of the Church, for Yoder, is one long, unrelenting road of apostasy and cultural idolatry until the period of the "radical Reformation" in the sixteenth century. Christian ethics, as Yoder conceives it, is located neither in human "nature" nor in rational notions of justice or the common good. Rather, it subsists in our radical obedience to Jesus' ethic of nonviolent resistance to political and social oppression.

For Yoder, the political powers are always and irrevocably fallen—inevitably opposed to the purposes of God. Revelation 13, not Romans 13, presents the state as it really is. In *Discipleship as Political Responsibility*, Yoder writes, "The divine mandate of the state consists in using evil means to keep evil from getting out of hand." Because political power is inherently evil, any cooperation with political power compromises the Christian, for the state is "a pagan institution in which Christians would not normally hold a position." If our understanding of the cross were properly formed, we would avoid the triumphalist temptation and assume our place, with the crucified Lamb, in opposition to the powers in whatever form they might appear.

In his writing, Yoder sets forth what he understands to be Jesus' prophetic stance over against other standard models of ethical decision making, which Yoder believes have distracted us over the last several centuries. One such distraction is the Catholic insistence that nature and grace do not stand in opposition. This, Yoder believes, has "foreshortened" the vision of the Kingdom of God by its focus on "the nature of things" in this fallen world. The result, he worries, is national idolatry and patriarchy.

Given the genesis of sixteenth-century Anabaptism, with persecution coming from both the Catholic and the Protestant sides, Yoder's pessimism toward the natural law is understandable, and he is at his best when critiquing the Christian community's tendency toward cultural idolatry. But he is also at his worst to the extent that he is unwilling to submit his notion of moral formation—and Christian social ethics—to the collective wisdom of the historic Christian tradition. Given his overarching commitment to ideological pacifism, Yoder's rejection of the natural law might be viewed as a result, not a cause, of his pacifist ethics. Like Barth, Yoder believes that natural law is "an addition" to the Word of God as divine revelation. In this regard, he believes, "the warning of the Barmen confessor [Barth] is still needed."

In assorted writings, the Methodist theologian Stanley Hauerwas confesses his debt to Yoderian Anabaptism, wishing to advance Yoder's vision of Christian social ethics. A prolific writer and innovative thinker, Hauerwas has been explicit in his rejection of the natural law—notably in *The Peaceable Kingdom* and *Truthfulness and Tragedy*. As with Yoder, the deep-seated distrust of natural-law thinking for Hauerwas is related to the Church's purported compromise with "Constantinianism." Accordingly, "the alleged transparency of the natural law norms reflects more the consensus within the Church than the universality of the natural law itself." This is substantiated for Hauerwas by "the fact that the power of natural law as a systematic idea was developed in and for the Roman imperium and then for 'Christendom.'"

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The natural-law tradition, as interpreted by Hauerwas, is a "culturally assimilationist" attempt at Christian ethics that mirrors the Church's cultural captivity. Moral theology gives expression to "an unquestioned ecclesial assumption" rather than to the practice of Christian virtue. Hauerwas believes that the "abstractions" of "nature and grace" have "distorted how ethics has been undertaken in the Catholic tradition." And while Hauerwas does acknowledge contact between Christian ethics and "other forms of the moral life," he believes these "are not sufficient to provide a basis for a 'universal' ethic grounded in human nature *per se*."

Responding to ethicist James Gustafson's charge that his ethical approach is sectarian, Hauerwas reasons: "I certainly have never denied the Christian affirmation of God as Creator; rather, I have refused to use that affirmation to underwrite an autonomous realm of morality separate from Christ's lordship." As it happens, the widespread worry about "autonomy"—like the parallel assumption that nature and grace stand in opposition—erects a false dualism that finds no place in historic Christian theology. It is a fairly late development, found predominately in post-Reformational Protestant theology.

Ultimately, Hauerwas believes that "Christian ethics theologically does not have a stake in 'natural law,'" which he believes to be a "primitive metaphysics." Mirroring Yoder's commitment to pacifism and nonviolent resistance to the state, Hauerwas suggests that the natural-law tradition offers justification for war and violence: "If just war is based on natural law, a law written in the conscience of all men and women by God, then it seems that war must be understood as the outgrowth of legitimate moral commitments." Just use of force and reluctantly going to war for justified purposes are for Hauerwas necessarily "the compromises we make with sin" and "cooperating with sin." In this context, however, John Courtney Murray's basic distinction between "violence" and "force" is worth noting: "Force is the measure of power necessary and sufficient to uphold . . . law and politics. What exceeds this measure is violence, which destroys the order of both law and politics. . . . As an instrument, force is morally neutral in itself."

Far from preparing society for violence, the natural law preserves social bonds and guards basic freedoms. Not only is it the grammar of a common moral discourse that Christians must use with pagans, it is also part of divine revelation, by which the public square is preserved. Christian ethics does not compromise by seeking to work for justice in the public square based on the natural law and shared humanity. One of the most important lessons we Protestants can learn from those who have championed the permanent things is that public morality must rest on public principles—principles that are rooted in the fabric of creation.

"The idea that Christianity brought an entirely new ethical code into the world is a grave error," C.S. Lewis insists in *Christian Reflections*. "If it had done so, then we should have to conclude that all who first preached it wholly misunderstood their own message: for all of them, its Founder, His precursor, His apostles, came demanding repentance and offering forgiveness, a demand and an offer both meaningless except on the assumption of a moral law *already known* and *already broken*." It is no more possible, Lewis argues, "to invent a new ethics than to place a new sun in the sky. Some precept from traditional morality always has to be presumed. We never start from a *tabula rasa*: if we did, we should end, ethically speaking, with a *tabula rasa*."

At the heart of the rejection of natural law by Protestant social ethics is the erection of a false dichotomy between nature and grace, leading to the mistaken assumption, particularly among evangelical Protestants, that the natural law is distinct from "Christian social ethics." This mistaken distinction fails to see the role our common human nature plays in moral theory and moral discourse—and thus it undermines any attempts to enter the public square, where critical ethical issues are at stake.

At best, we convince ourselves that, in our radical commitment to the ethics of Jesus—or in our radical separation and denunciation of the powers, or in our detached apocalypticism—we most faithfully embody Christian discipleship and Christian social ethics. At worst, we delude ourselves by being severed from the mainstream of historic Christian thought, even when we believe we are acting prophetically. In practice, this posture prevents us from entering into responsible dialogue with unbelievers. There remains no ethical language intelligible to the nonbeliever. In the end, apart from natural law, we lose any basis upon which to build a moral apologetic and to contribute meaningfully to civil society.

For many Protestants, the word *law* can be explained only in terms of Christ, "the Spirit's leading," and a concept of grace that is confined to a reading of the New Testament in ethical discontinuity with the Old Testament. But the quandary of law is not merely a Christian question; it is rather a human question, as Wolfgang Pannenberg has rightly argued. Since law is part of creation, the order of things as they are, it is a biblical, an anthropological, and an eminently theological question: Human beings cannot avoid or deny their true nature, which, made in the image of God, seeks order.

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Thus, natural theology concerns cosmic reality, not human autonomy. And cosmic reality entails law. The structure of law is such that it informs the commandments and forms the basis for ethics. The New Covenant in no way abrogates this moral reality. Therefore, law cannot be severed from authentic Christian religion and social ethics.

While love speaks to the proper motivation, law provides the God-given structure within which obedience is performed. St. Paul and St. James speak with one voice in this regard: Love fulfills the law. And short of the eschaton, law will always and everywhere be necessary—for justice has an abiding character and a universal shape. FT

Signs and Portents, Read from the Margin

"The family will receive friends at home this evening from 7 to 9," *Oglethorpe Echo*

Wading hip-deep in the snarl and sputter of my mower—
The torn grass behind me limp in its green blood—
I glance across at the familiar house.
Still now, though unsettled family dogs bark alarm from the back yard,
Protesting my intrusion mid-week and days from any sensible Sunday.
I tidy my lawn for the pending occasion, a neighborly gesture.

A local curious car slows, its driver craning,
Awed by the front porch light shining mid-morning.
The white wreath seems a sudden blossom,
Or perhaps a hollow sun ablaze on the closed front door, a warning.
A certainty of sign more current and personal
Than CNN blaring Balkan eruptions.

At the back door a strange kinsman shakes
The old mop over the porch rail,
Scolding the dogs into silence in a cadence with the flailing,
A ritual erasing the past, though the enduring sun
Catches a sparkle of the settling dust.

By first dusk there will be the children's voices:
Through the house, out into the secret corners of an unfamiliar yard.
Or indulged to catch random fireflies in dangerous glass jars from the kitchen.
That sly courting under glass will be sensed,
But not yet understood.

The old house, in full light now,
A shuffle of feet stutters apology for the mystery of darkness,
With the children at play in not quite innocent blood.
A strange kinsman leans over the porch rail,
Cautions to silence with impatient words drifting the gathering dark.

Old memories recovered, old portents in ambiguous signs,
Where my spewn grass writhes into brown innocence,
Lies indifferent to fireflies or the sounds of brash children,
Refutation of the ambiguous and thickening darkness.

Marion Montgomery

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Books in Review

The Form of Speaking

THE LANGUAGE OF GOD
by FRANCIS S. COLLINS
Free Press, 304 pages, $26

Reviewed by Stephen M. Barr

"TODAY WE ARE LEARNING the language in which God created life." With these words, President Clinton announced one of the great feats of modern science, the mapping of the human genome. Standing next to him in the East Room of the White House was the leader of the Human Genome Project, Francis S. Collins.

Collins has now written a book, *The Language of God*, but it is not the sort of book one might have expected him to write, for only a small part is devoted to the genome project. Rather, Collins has written the story of his other great discovery: the discovery not of new truths but of old truths. It is the story of how and why he came to believe in God.

As such, this book is almost unique. There are many conversion stories and many scientific autobiographies, but few books in which prominent scientists tell how they came to faith. If nothing else, Collins' book gives the lie, in most spectacular fashion, to the claim made by Richard Dawkins in an interview not long ago: "You won't find *any* intelligent person who feels the need for the supernatural," Dawkins declared, "unless [he was] brought up that way."

Francis Collins was not brought up that way; his family's view was that religion "just wasn't very important." Almost the only contact Collins had with religion as a child was singing in the choir at the local Episcopal church, where his parents had sent him to learn music with the admonition that he shouldn't take the theology too seriously. After discovering, in high-school science classes, "the intense satisfaction of the ordered nature of the universe," Collins entered the University of

STEPHEN M. BARR *is a theoretical particle physicist at the Bartol Research Institute of the University of Delaware and author of* Modern Physics and Ancient Faith.

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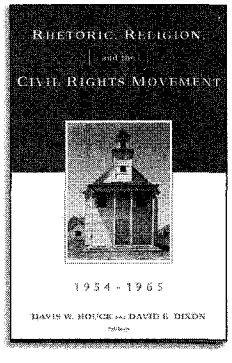

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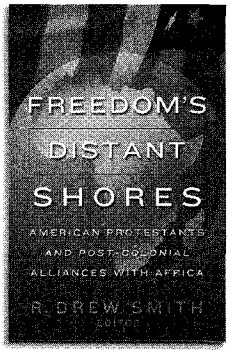

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Virginia at the age of sixteen to major in chemistry. Up to then, he had given little thought to religion, though in his early teens he had had "occasional moments of . . . longing for something outside myself," most often associated with profound experiences of nature or of music. Exposed to the challenges of "one or two aggressive atheists" in his dorm, however, he quickly concluded that no religion had any "foundational truth."

The mathematical elegance of physics drew him into physical chemistry, where he was "immersed in quantum mechanics and second-order differential equations" and "gradually became convinced that everything in the universe could be explained on the basis of equations and physical principles." Discovering that Einstein, one of his heroes, had not believed in the God of the Jewish people, Collins concluded that "no thinking scientist" could take the idea of God seriously, and he "gradually shifted from agnosticism to atheism."

While working on his doctorate at Yale, Collins happened to take a course in biochemistry and was "astounded" by DNA and proteins "in all of their satisfying digital glory." It was a "revelation" to him that mathematics and "rigorous intellectual principles" could be applied to biology, a field he had previously disdained. Around this time, however, he began to wonder how he could "make a difference in the lives of real people" and whether he was cut out for a life of research. And so, just before completing his degree in chemistry, he switched to medical school.

It was in medical school that his atheism suffered a blow: "I found the relationships [I] developed with sick and dying patients almost overwhelming." The strength and solace so many of them derived from faith profoundly impressed him and left him thinking that "if faith was a psychological crutch . . . it must be a very powerful one." His "most awkward moment" came when an older woman, suffering from a severe and untreatable heart problem, asked him what he believed. "I felt my face flush as I stammered out the words 'I'm not really sure.'" Suddenly it was brought home to him that he had dismissed religion without ever really considering—or even knowing—the arguments in its favor. How could someone who prided himself on his scientific rationality do that? He was deeply shaken and felt impelled to

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carry out an honest and unprejudiced examination of religion. Attempts to read the sacred scriptures of various world religions left him baffled, however, so he sought out a local Methodist minister and asked him point-blank "whether faith made any logical sense." The minister took a book down from his shelf and handed it to him. It was C.S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity*.

Lewis gave Collins a simple, though crucial, insight: God is not a part of the physical universe and therefore cannot be perceived by the methods of science. Yet God speaks to us in our hearts and minds, both in such "longings" for the transcendent as Collins had himself experienced and in the sense of objective right and wrong, "the Moral Law." A key aspect of this moral sense is "the altruistic impulse, the voice of conscience calling us to help others even if nothing is received in return." Such altruism, says Collins, "is quite frankly a scandal for reductionist reasoning," for it goes directly contrary to the selfishness of the "selfish gene."

Collins reviews some of the attempts to explain altruism in evolutionary terms. One theory is that our primate ancestors rated altruism a positive attribute in potential mates. Another is that altruism provided survival advantages to its practitioners through "indirect reciprocal benefits." A third is that altruism benefited the whole group in which it was prevalent rather than the individuals who practiced it. Collins explains why none of these theories works. He then goes on to discuss several common objections to belief in God that troubled him at first but to which he was able to find satisfactory answers with the help of Lewis and other Christian writers. Collins presents these answers in clear, simple, and appealing language. Their power lies not only in strength of argument but also in their personal character, as when he discusses the problem of evil in the context of a tragedy that befell his own daughter.

Collins also examines what science has to say about the origins of the universe, life, and human beings. As he traces the history of the universe, he points to three discoveries that bolster the case for a creator. One is the "existence of mathematical principles and order in creation," laws whose "mathematical representation invariably turns out to be elegant, surprisingly simple, and even beautiful."

Another is the Big Bang, the putative beginning of the universe about

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fourteen billion years ago. And a third is the remarkable concatenation of "anthropic" coincidences and fine-tunings in the laws of physics that made possible the evolution of life.

It is interesting that Collins, a biologist, should take most of his "evidence for belief" from physics. As someone who came to biology through the physical sciences, he is obviously keenly aware of what Pope Benedict has called "the mathematical structure of matter, its intrinsic rationality, . . . the Platonic element in the modern understanding of nature." One notes, by contrast, that some of the biologists who are most outspoken in their atheism have come from a background in zoology rather than the physical sciences. It may be that the scientists most susceptible to crude materialism are those who know the least about matter.

The physics and cosmology in the book are well done, but Collins' discussion of the Big Bang is open to several criticisms. It is not quite accurate to say that the Big Bang "forces the conclusion that nature had a defined beginning." Most physicists and cosmologists think it possible that the Big Bang was only the beginning of one phase of the universe's history; the conclusion that the universe had a beginning at some point (whether at the Big Bang or earlier) is not yet forced by the physics alone. Collins also too simply equates the creation of the universe with the fact that it had a beginning in time. Even a universe that had no beginning in time would still require its existence to be explained. And finally, there are points at which Collins seems to speak of the Big Bang as miraculous in the sense that the laws of physics broke down there, which is very doubtful. To be fair, these are issues that may be too subtle for a satisfactory treatment in a book aimed at such a wide audience. And Collins' main point is certainly valid: Nature could not have created itself, and the Big Bang, by underlining the contingency of the world's existence, supports the idea of creation.

As Collins moves from discussing the origin and development of the physical universe to the origin and development of life, he must enter on the battle-scarred terrain of evolution, a subject that takes up most of the latter half of the book. Here his message and his primary audience change. Up to this point he has been speaking on behalf of religious belief. He now turns around and speaks to his fellow Christians, especially his fellow evangelicals, on behalf of evolution. His fundamental purpose, however, remains the same: "to call a truce in the escalating war between science and spirit," a war that "was never really necessary" but "was initiated and intensified by extremists on both sides."

Collins is appalled that "Young Earth Creationism is the view held by approximately 45 percent of Americans" and that "many evangelical Christian churches are aligned" with it. The persistence of this view, which is at once so theologically simplistic and scientifically indefensible, is "one of the great puzzles and tragedies of our time." The danger is not to science but to faith: "Young people brought up in homes and churches that insist on Creationism sooner or later encounter the overwhelming scientific evidence in favor of an ancient universe and the relatedness of all living things through the process of evolution and natural selection. What a terrible and unnecessary choice they then face!"

In his appeal to young-earth creationists, Collins deploys both scientific and theological arguments. Though the evidence for evolution comes from many directions, he nat-

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urally focuses on the recent, powerful evidence that comes from studying the genomes of different species, evidence that, he says, "could fill hundreds of books of this length." One of the examples he gives is the existence of "pseudogenes." These are genes that have suffered mutations that "turn their script into gibberish" and render them defunct. "The human gene known as caspase-12, for instance, has sustained several knockout blows, though it is found in the identical relative location in the [genome of the] chimp. The chimp caspase-12 works just fine, as does the similar gene in nearly all mammals." If the body of man did not evolve, but was formed as the young-earth creationists believe, then "why would God have gone to the trouble of inserting such a non-functional gene in this precise location?"

In Collins' view, the Intelligent Design movement, unlike young-earth creationism, "deserves serious consideration" scientifically. Nonetheless, he sees it as a misguided and doomed effort that is, ironically, "on a path toward doing considerable damage to faith." It is driven by a fear that Darwinism is incompatible with biblical belief and is an attempt "to find a scientifically respectable alternative."

Collins argues forcefully that Darwinian evolution is, in fact, perfectly compatible with biblical faith. He avoids the trap into which so many liberal theologians have fallen: thinking that the lesson of evolution is that everything evolves, including God. Collins sees clearly that the key to harmonizing Darwinian evolution with Jewish and Christian faith is through the traditional teaching, so profoundly elaborated by St. Augustine, that God is outside time: "If God is outside of nature, then He is outside of space and time. In that context, God could in the moment of creation of the universe also know every detail of the future. That could include the formation of the stars, planets, and galaxies, all of the chemistry, physics, geology, and biology that led to the formation of life on earth, and the evolution of humans. . . . In that context, evolution could appear to us to be driven by chance, but from God's perspective the outcome would be entirely specified. Thus, God could be completely and intimately involved in the creation of all species, while from our perspective, limited as it is by the tyranny of linear time, this would appear a random and undirected process." With the aid of St. Augustine and C.S. Lewis, Collins knocks down one theological objection to Darwinian evolution after another.

For reasons that are unclear, Collins chooses to end his book with a lengthy appendix on medical-ethics issues, in which he defends certain positions that are necessitated neither by science nor religion. Not only does this run counter to the aims of the rest of the book, but the level of argument by which he attempts to justify "somatic cell nuclear transfer," a form of cloning, hardly does him credit.

Still, *The Language of God* is a book of enormous value. At a time when so many people on both sides are trying to foment a conflict between science and religion, Collins is a sorely needed voice of reason. His book may do more to promote better understanding between the worlds of faith and science than any other so far written. I suspect that Collins himself would regard that as an achievement no less important than the one for which he was honored six years ago in the East Room of the White House.

The author of Christ the Lord
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Fighting the Good Fight

God's War: A New History of the Crusades
by Christopher Tyerman
Belknap, 1,040 pages, $35

Reviewed by Thomas F. Madden

Not too many years ago, single-volume histories of the Crusades were a rarity. Bookstores were crowded with volumes on the Civil War or World War II, but there was little on medieval battles fought in far-away lands. That all changed on September 11, 2001. Within a few days of the attacks on the United States, the Crusades were pulled from obscurity and plastered across the world's front pages. Al Qaeda made them an issue by directing its attacks against "American Crusaders." When President George W. Bush, while speaking about the war on terror, used the "C-word" in its common usage as a "grand enterprise," the medieval Crusades finally reached stardom. They even got their own movie: *Kingdom of Heaven*, directed by Ridley Scott and starring heartthrob Orlando Bloom.

All of this created a new market, and authors were not slow to fill it. Today there are rows of general histories of the Crusades. Many, it is true, are written by people with no expertise in medieval history or even basic competency in the languages necessary for research on medieval topics. But professional Crusade historians have also responded to the market—particularly the classroom market—for almost every medieval historian in America is now expected to teach a course on the Crusades. Some historians, such as Jonathan Phillips or Thomas Asbridge, have even written books for a general audience, seeking to bridge the gap between what historians know and what most people think about Christianity's holy wars.

Like many of the academic newcomers to this market, Christopher Tyerman has a solid pedigree as an accomplished and respected scholar in the field. Yet, unlike the others, he is not seeking simply to put one more history of the Crusades on those now crowded shelves. Instead, one cannot escape the impression that his thick new opus, *God's War*, is meant to be the "new Runciman." (Steven Runciman's three-volume

Thomas F. Madden *is professor of medieval history and chair of the department of history at Saint Louis University.*

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History of the Crusades, although published half a century ago, still remains popular. It is said that Runciman once joked that, aside from himself, the only other author to have made more money for Cambridge University Press was God, with his book, the Bible. If the publicity blurbs for *God's War* are any indication, Harvard University Press is hoping that Tyerman will have the same success.)

Tyerman is not unaware of this, although he is quick to disclaim any such comparison: "It would be folly and hubris to pretend to compete, to match, as it were, my clunking computer keyboard with his [Runciman's] pen, at once a rapier and a paintbrush; to pit one volume, however substantial, with the breadth, scope and elegance of his three." Protests aside, his one substantial volume could easily be divided into three that would rival Runciman in weight, if not elegance.

And that is where we come to the real problem. For all his errors, biases, and quirks, Runciman wrote something that remains a work of art. He produced a narrative in which the people, places, and times came vibrantly to life. Tyerman, on the other hand, has written a very long commentary on the history of the Crusades. For Tyerman, history is frequently just a vehicle for making a point. For Runciman, it was something to be told.

Given Tyerman's previous scholarship, *God's War* is a bit of a surprise. In his 1998 book, *The Invention of the Crusades*, Tyerman argued that the Crusades did not exist much before the pontificate of Innocent III (1198–1216), thus implying that the First, Second, and Third Crusades were nothing of the sort. This theory did not find much scholarly support at the time, and Tyerman seems to have dropped it. (The merest whimper of the thesis can be discerned when he states that crusading was "reinvented" after the loss of Jerusalem in 1187, or when he refers to Innocent's contribution to the Crusades as "a sort of creation.") Indeed, Tyerman follows the standard framework of Crusade histories—offering sections on the First Crusade, the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, and the Second, Third, and Fourth Crusades. These are followed by chapters on crusading in Europe, Louis IX and the decline of the Latin Kingdom, and finally the post-1291 Crusades.

Although the chapters are arranged chronologically, the histor-

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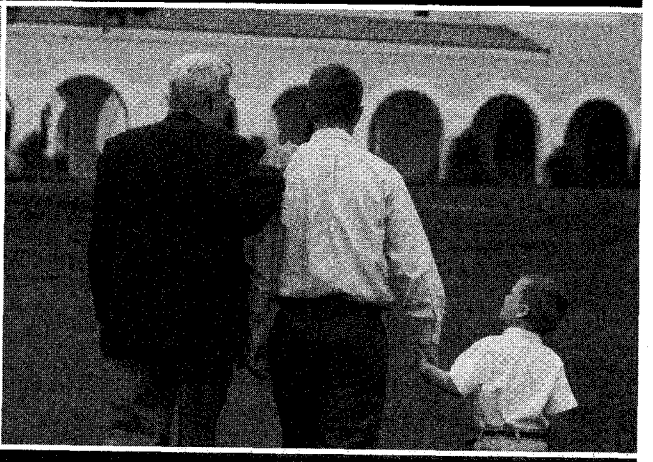

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ical narrative is not. Tyerman has an annoying habit of jumping from one part of his story to another. It is rather like listening to a record player with someone repeatedly moving the needle to new locations. As a result, if readers do not know the story of the Crusades ahead of time, they will likely be lost. Tyerman writes almost like his medieval sources, describing a few events and then heading off on narrative tangents. People, places, and events are pulled from across the spectrum of medieval history to make whatever point seems necessary.

For example, when describing the command of the First Crusade on the way to Constantinople, Tyerman has no problem switching his discussion to much later events when the Crusade was camped before Antioch. The astonishing conclusion of the Fourth Crusade is not told as a crescendo (as, in fact, it occurred) but fully described at the *beginning* of its story. Emperor Frederick II's conduct in a restored Jerusalem is described before Tyerman even tells his reader about the treaty that restored it. For a specialist, this approach is acceptable. For someone simply wanting to learn about the Crusades, however, it is less so—as though Tyerman expects his reader to be well-versed in the history of the Crusades before reading his history of the Crusades.

That does not mean that the book stumbles in other respects. Tyerman brings to *God's War* the fruits of his own research in the vibrant field of Crusades studies. This is a book that medieval historians will want to read with care. It is, in fact, the first major work of its kind fully to take into account modern historiography, and, for the most part, Tyerman's conclusions are well grounded on the evidence and right on the mark. There is no getting around the fact that he is a first-rate historian.

There are those occasions, however, when I find his arguments and approaches troublesome. For example, Tyerman frequently notes that religious motives or pious idealism played roles in the Crusades but only as a qualifier to subsequent descriptions of political and economic motives. He is insistent that piety and greed were not contradictory in the Middle Ages, which is quite correct. We hear, however, much more about the greed than about the piety. Indeed, it is surprising how little religion seems to figure in Tyerman's Crusades.

It is perhaps telling that, when describing the Christian background of the movement, he notes that "religious beliefs crucial to such warfare placed enormous significance on imagined awesome but reassuring supernatural forces of overwhelming power and proximity." The root of this approach is Tyerman's conviction that Christianity was a religion of peace that was led to embrace war by the "so-called Church Fathers," popes, and propagandists. He accepts the old saw that Pope Urban II cleverly devised the First Crusade to further his own power and agenda. That Urban's own words, as well as the words of the Crusaders themselves, described the Crusade as a response to Turkish attacks in the East is for Tyerman evidence only of the pope's political skill. There was, he insists, no real threat from the Turks in 1095. Although he admits that contemporary sources like al-Azimi mention Muslim attacks on Christian pilgrims, for Tyerman these reports "invite suspicion." He suggests instead that, although Turkish attacks had not actually increased, the larger number of European visitors to the East brought more attention to them. Yet surely this sort of "Turks will be Turks" argument would have carried less weight when the attacks were actually occurring.

One is often left with the feeling that no one in the Middle Ages believed what they said—unless what they said was cynical or wicked. Throughout *God's War*, popes are endlessly manipulating texts, fears, and beliefs for their own worldly ends. Crusade preachers are generally hucksters or confidence men. Muslim leaders fare no better. Saladin's personal beheading of Reynald of Châtillon "satisfied the needs of propaganda rather than anger." When Jerusalem fell to Saladin in 1187, the sultan "milked the symbolism of his triumph." Without denying worldly concerns, is it not possible that some of these medieval people may have actually believed in the idealistic motives they proclaimed?

Tyerman's description of the decline of crusading is quite good. He argues that the rise of secularism brought down the power of the Church, thus ultimately pulling the plug on the Crusades. As Tyerman succinctly puts it: "Christianity thrived; Christendom was dead. With it died one of its most distinctive features, the Crusade." This is true as far as it goes, although it does not address the continually diminishing Muslim threat, which made Crusades less necessary. Although the Christian world changed, Tyerman explains, the Muslim world did not. "Thus Islam's holy war, the lesser jihad, remains a modern phenomenon. The Christian Crusade, except in the mouths of certain meretricious academics and unthinking politicians, does not." (As an academic himself, Tyerman is careful not to neglect the customary jab at the political right.)

God's War is without doubt a significant achievement. Like Steven Runciman's famous history, Tyerman's tome will have an important impact on the scholarly historiography of the Crusades. Unfortunately, its effect on public perceptions of the Crusades is likely to be much more modest.

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The Occidental Difference

What Is the West?
by Philippe Nemo
Duquesne University Press,
155 pages, $18.95

Reviewed by David Gress

Back in the late 1970s, Philippe Nemo was one of a group of young French philosophy graduates who turned against what was called the Generation of 1968. The intellectual culture of France was dominated in those days by a radical Marxist left that insisted liberal democracy was the fount of evil in the world—and universal revolution, spearheaded by intellectuals and students, was the only sure road to justice, peace, and an end to exploitation. Nemo's group, which labeled itself "the new philosophers," included such diverse figures as Bernard-Henry Lévy and André Glucksmann. It is not unfair to say that however famous others in the group became, Nemo had the most important things to say.

The question Nemo poses in *What Is the West?* is this: By what series of historical encounters did Western civilization become the combination of "the rule of law, democracy, intellectual liberties, critical rationality, science, and economic freedom founded on private property?" The West evolved as a series of elements joined in a synthesis greater than its parts. Christianity, Nemo asserts, entered not as a religion but as an "ethical spirit within secular society." The West was never coterminous with its faith. Always the believers found themselves in a world they had partly made and partly inherited from the classical past. Always they were challenged to adapt to what they believed to be the exigencies of a political and social world they respected too much to want to subordinate to a theocracy.

The story begins with the Greeks, who invented scientific speculation and the ideal of the city, in which "individual lives are no longer submerged in a vast sea of humanity.... Each person now has individuality and character." To this—a point of capital importance—the Romans added their "invention of private law," whereby they "invented the individual human person."

The next stage, of course, is Christianity or, rather, the impact of biblical religion and spirituality on ancient culture, an impact that was crucial in transforming that culture into what we call medieval. Biblical religion introduced an ethical and an eschatological revolution, "cherishing the individual, morally responsible human being, by emphasizing human individuality as desired and created by God for all eternity." But, Nemo adds, that ethical revolution "might never have bestowed such theological significance on the individual person had these beliefs not taken root in a society that had already granted importance to the human ego." Without Christianity, there is no civilization of human rights, but without the Greek city, Greek science, and Roman law, there is no Christendom.

Nemo here uncovers a fundamental logic of western civilization. The West is a civilization of borrowings and mixtures, whose result, never fixed and never self-satisfied, is more than a mere function of those borrowings. The West, in fact, as Nemo's colleague and friend Rémi Brague has written, is by definition a "secondary" culture, a culture of followers who know they are followers. Neither Greek political philosophy nor Christianity were western inventions, yet their confluence created the West.

Nemo is too good a scholar to point to any one encounter as the decisive one; all were necessary. He does, however, make a justified and welcome case that the so-called Papal Revolution of the late eleventh to thirteenth centuries was a time of remarkable and unusual ferment, and one on which modern democracy, science, and hope for progress directly rest. The Papal Revolution

David Gress *is the author of* From Plato to NATO: The Idea of the West and Its Opponents. *He is currently based in Denmark, where he is cultural commentator for the daily* Jyllands-Posten.

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was, on the outside, the successful attempt to prevent temporal rulers from controlling church appointments and, as such, a struggle for *libertas ecclesiae*, the freedom of the Church. As Nemo reminds us, on the outcome of that struggle rests the modern separation of church and state and hence, ultimately, democracy itself.

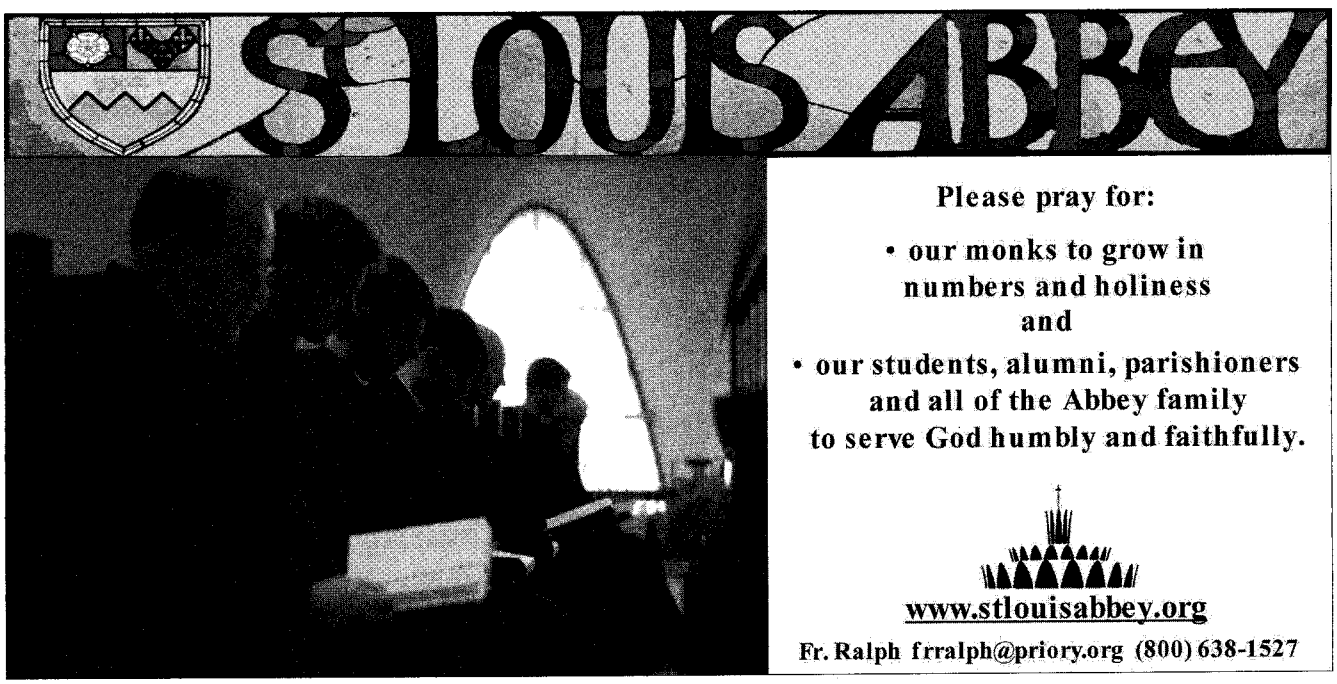
But even more important was the story of what the great thinkers, St. Anselm in particular, wrought. This was to rehabilitate, legitimate, and encourage human action in the world, including political action. By formulating the concepts of atonement and purgatory, Anselm made it possible, indeed necessary, to think that "human action in the world makes sense again, since all works, although finite, make their way into the reckoning. Even the most insignificant act can shift the balance from negative to positive. This insight and change of outlook eliminate in one fell swoop the profound superstition of the Middle Ages." As a result, men came to hope and believe in the "process of developing every power and resource available to human nature and human reason in order to use them in the fulfillment of the ethical and eschatological ideals of the Bible."

In recounting the Papal Revolution and its theological corollaries, Nemo is making yet another important point about the frame of mind and the reasoning of those who brought about the changes. Many fashionable thinkers are fond of saying that the medieval and modern West got all its valuable intellectual resources from the Greeks via the Arabs, who, unlike the benighted Catholic Europeans, had the wit to preserve Greek philosophy and medicine. Nemo does not deny that important wisdom came to Europe via the Arabs, but, as he says, that is "less significant than the spirit that charged these texts with meaning, then renewed them, to the extent of overseeing a new beginning for science in the world." The spirit in which that wisdom was sought and used is the point, and this spirit was western, not Arab or even Greek.

Christianity in its Anselmian form sanctified human action and human reason. "From this moment on, civilization becomes a synthesis of Athens, Rome, and Jerusalem.... Faith expresses itself through the flowering of human nature," the insight immortalized by Dante in the greatest poem of the West, the *Divine Comedy*. Without this medieval breakthrough, modern science, modern secular reason, and modern political democracy were unthinkable. In Nemo's reading, the Protestant Reformation, whatever its political and economic repercussions, merely developed a logic and an understanding of human action and reason already launched by Anselm.

Protestants might object to getting such short shrift, and, indeed, if Nemo's essay has a weakness it is that he does not seem to know exactly what to make of the Reformers. Instead, Nemo moves quickly to his fifth "miracle," the liberal and democratic reforms of the Enlightenment, especially its American and British versions, which resulted in the modern western world and "extended... the aim of the Papal Revolution, namely the improvement of the world through the application of science and law."

Linking modern democracy so strongly to political and theological developments of the twelfth century is perhaps Nemo's most daring argu-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ment. He disagrees not only with the secularists but also with most Christian and liberal progressives in tracing the most characteristically modern western manifestations to these medieval changes rather than to the usual sources given, the Renaissance or the radical Enlightenment.

Modern democracy began to take root when "social elites realized that a pluralist order in the realm of the constitution, as well as in intellectual and scientific pursuits, was useful." Thus it is also not true, as many economic historians insist, that first came capitalism, then democracy. As another contemporary French scholar, Jean Baechler, has consistently asserted, freedom came first, then economic development, and Nemo shows why. For Baechler, the freedom was primarily political and consisted in the niches of liberty permitted by the competition of political forces in geopolitically fragmented Europe. Nemo shows that more important than these political niches was the intellectual breakthrough of the Papal Revolution, which approved the use of reason or, more precisely, distinguished the proper use of man's God-given reason from the false.

Holding democracy to be a result of how Christianity evolved in the West, Nemo is equally firm in holding that modern totalitarianism was not the evil essence of the West. The West, in this semi-Marxist view, is characterized by power and exploitation, democracy being merely a sham. Totalitarianism was simply the West without the mask. Any decent political philosophy that rejects totalitarianism must, in this widespread interpretation, also reject much of the West. In both elite ideology and much popular common wisdom, modern totalitarianism and Christianity are lumped together as bad, authoritarian, inhuman ideologies of unnatural constraint that must be rejected, and, since they were western, the rejection takes the form of multiculturalism and liberal guilt.

The final stage of Nemo's historical analysis is to ask whether western culture is universal now and, if so, what that means. "Does modernization require westernization?" asks the Indian-born economist Deepak Lal. Nemo remains agnostic but suggests that we need not wait for the final answer, if any, to the question of what the West is today and what it should do to survive. He proposes, therefore, a "western union" of the United States and such other states as can bring themselves to recognize a western identity consisting of the elements Nemo has described.

Unfortunately, such a western union, which Nemo conceives of as more a moral and intellectual force than a political alliance, has few chances as long as Europe is run by people who think Catholics are dangerous in power and as long as the United States still suffers under an elite that, even when it acknowledges religion, continues to follow a multiculturalist creed in which the only good values are universal ones and in which the ultimate sin is to think the West really has anything to offer.

A western union of a different sort may, however, be possible: a union of citizens who can see the justice and truth of Nemo's account and who understand the West as he sketches it, not as the result of expropriations and imperialism, of barbarity and exploitation, but as the result of an evolving spirit characterized, in its productive and creative phases, by openness resting on a strong intrinsic faith. Had the West not first been

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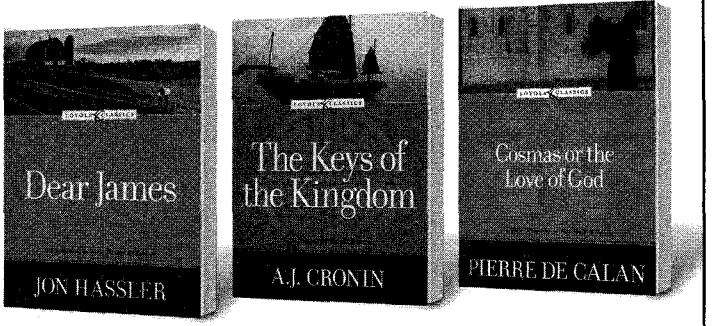

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Christian, it could never have become the modern dynamic West. Christianity, its formative element, needed the Anselmian revolution to become the kind of society-shaping religion needed for the borrowings to be attractive and for the borrowers to be able to use them and build on them.

Among Nemo's many virtues is that he writes clearly and vividly. This is not a virtue of many of his compatriots but French philosophers and historians used to have a great tradition of forceful, clear writing, and Nemo is of that tradition. Another great value of his exposition is that he understands how the logic of human liberty is not just spiritual or just political but is spiritual, political, and economic at the same time. Nemo belongs to the deeper tradition that understands human action as a whole.

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The Needle's Eye

THE GREEK PRAISE OF POVERTY: ORIGINS OF ANCIENT CYNICISM
by WILLIAM D. DESMOND
University of Notre Dame Press, 240 pages, $25

Reviewed by Drew E. Griffin

WE ALL KNOW THE STORY: Carrying a lantern at midday into the marketplace, the great Cynical philosopher Diogenes states that he is searching for an honest man. As it happens, the source, Diogenes Laertius, makes no mention of the marketplace or honesty. But in whatever version, the story is a classic: Diogenes—critical and incisive—in one of his many provocations, defacing the currency, the customs, of the realm. Such provocations earned him his moniker, the Dog, and his followers their name, the Cynics.

Diogenes is, in the history of ideas, unique. Combine the poverty of St. Francis, the satire of Rabelais, the moral critique of Nietzsche, add a dash of Thoreau, and finish with a peculiar shamelessness. The ancients reverenced him: In Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of Eminent Philosophers,* only Zeno, Epicurus, and Plato garner more attention. Modern scholarship, however, tells a different story. Studies of the Hellenistic period ignore him, arguing, in their silence, that he lacks the significance of Zeno, Epicurus, or even Pyrrho. He is viewed at best as a wayward child of the nascent Hellenistic age, the beginning of the end of classical thought, and at worst as illegitimate, the importation of an eastern asceticism and impoverishment.

Cynicism is the earliest of the great Hellenistic schools, a major influence on those that follow, but can we call Cynicism a Hellenistic philosophy? If the classical age ends with the death of Alexander in 323 B.C., then surely Epicurus, born in 341, and Zeno, born eight years later, are Hellenistic. But Diogenes—dying in the same year, by some accounts on the same day, as Alexander—was born in the waning years of the fifth century, and his forerunner and possible teacher Antisthenes (who has direct ties to Socrates) is born years before Plato. That Diogenes' asceticism and impoverishment seems foreign to classical Greek thought perhaps reflects less historical fact and more our own desires. Cynicism's founders are as classical as Aristotle and Plato.

In another story, Laertius reports that Plato, when asked about Diogenes, called him a "Socrates gone mad." Diogenes' poverty seems a perfect example. Socrates views his own poverty as incidental, the unintended result of his service to Athens, while Diogenes deliberately desires poverty itself. But is this madness? Socrates, *the* model of a philosopher, is more than merely unintentionally poor: Indifferent to his own comforts, conversing with rich and poor alike, he exhibits a self-sufficiency that calls into question any necessity for wealth. And Plato himself follows Socrates when he argues against the philosopher kings having any regard for money and finds decline when some of those kings turn to moneymaking.

IN RECENT YEARS, a small Cynic revival has taken place. A fine collection of essays, *The Cynics: The Cynic Movement in Antiquity and Its Legacy,* and new studies of Diogenes and Antisthenes by Luis Navia relate Cynicism's reflection of Greek culture, its philosophical importance, and its continuing significance. But these studies still place Cynicism within a Hellenistic framework and leave Cynic poverty unexplored. Now, in *The Greek Praise of Poverty: Origins of Ancient Cynicism,* William D. Desmond wants to tell

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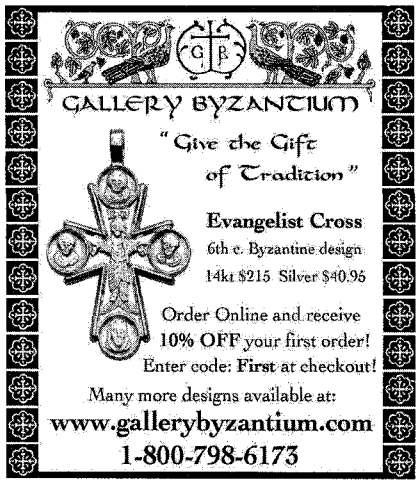
a new story, one of a classical Cynicism.

Through a comprehensive analysis of wealth and poverty in classical Greek thought, Desmond recounts two concurrent themes. The first illuminates the Greek understanding of the virtue of poverty, running mainly from Hesiod to Aristotle, though concentrating on the late fifth and early fourth centuries' historical, comedic, and philosophical writings; the second illuminates this understanding's continuation in Diogenes and Cynical thought in general. Desmond's goal is to read the Cynic emphasis on poverty as part of the classical tradition, precisely as part of the cultural thinking of the late fifth and early fourth centuries that praises poverty. To this end, he argues, rightly, that "Cynicism should be seen as a purely classical phenomenon, with deep roots in many aspects of Greek experience," interpreting even "Cynic asceticism as a response to the Greek experience of poverty."

Greek thought continually debated the relevance of wealth for virtue. From Hesiod to Aristotle, the sufficiency of wealth for virtue is usually in doubt, although its necessity is often accepted. In outlining the Greek praise of poverty, Desmond concentrates on associated fifth-century themes: the injustice often lurking behind wealth, its connection with hubris, a negative estimation of businessmen, the traditional attack on usury. The rich man finds no respite, continually working to make more money, constantly fearful of robbers and sycophants, conscious of burdensome societal requirements. Virtue is more clearly allied with poverty. And Socrates' paradoxical statement in Plato's *Apology* that "not out of money does virtue arise, but out of virtue money and all other goods for human beings, both private and public"—a passage that has given modern scholars fits for generations—underscores the self-sufficiency of the virtuous individual.

Along the way, Desmond elucidates the Cynics' paradox that poverty is wealth, a seemingly clear example of Socrates gone mad. Their emphasis on self-sufficiency and frugality—so complete that questions should arise how Diogenes ever procured a lantern and why he was wasting oil in a search so futile—is the result of a long tradition of praise of poverty, culminating in their view that wealth is qualitative, the internal condition of virtue, to which only poverty can lead.

Desmond locates in Herodotus a similar understanding, although at the level of society. In a series of stories, Herodotus narrates that a country's great wealth leads to hubris, inevitably resulting in its downfall at the hands of a seemingly weaker country, impoverished yet virtuous. First is the story of Croesus, he of inexhaustible wealth, and the Persian king Cyrus. Croesus' hubris results in the loss of his kingdom, and his



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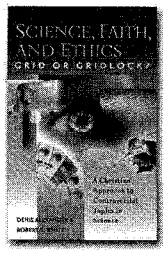

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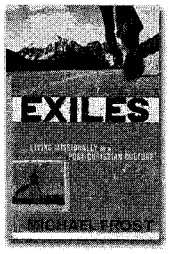

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freedom, to Cyrus, who in turn repeats the pattern: After gaining great wealth, he decides—even though Croesus himself warns him against it—to invade a poor country, and he loses not only the war with the Massagetae but also his life. A generation later, Darius attempts to invade Scythia and loses as well.

THESE STORIES, THOUGH, are mere prologue. Persia has been transformed from a poor country into one of infinite wealth, setting the stage for the invasion of poor but valiant Greece. Now led by Xerxes, the great Persian army, so large it takes seven days to cross the Hellespont, is slowed by no more than six thousand Greeks at the Battle of Thermopylae, allowing the Athenians time to evacuate Athens, bring their fleet to Salamis, and defeat the Persians. With this victory of impoverished virtue over hubristic wealth, the classical age is born. And for fourth-century thinkers, nothing could be more clear than the later chapter of Athens itself, which, having become hubristic through great wealth, attacks impoverished Sparta and loses its empire. Wealth leads to hubris, to vice in general; a martial life, the life of a lowly impoverished hoplite, fighting for his country and not for wealth, leads to virtue. The Cynic, at war with society for his soul, lives a martial life, the continual hardships of self-sufficiency and frugality, for which courage is the essential virtue.

For Desmond, Cynicism need not be the logical outcome of the virtue of poverty. Deliberately chosen poverty is not the only response to wealth's vices. Self-sufficiency need not be understood as individualistically as the Cynics interpret it, an extreme neither their contemporaries nor we may find especially fruitful. Aristotle cogently argues that complete self-sufficiency is only for a wild beast or a god, referring perhaps in the first to Diogenes himself, and both he and Plato write of self-sufficiency without the seeming madness of a complete rejection of society. But (and here lies the strength of Desmond's fine analysis) Cynicism is, like Platonism and Aristotelianism, a classical Greek enterprise, arising from and expanding on its preoccupation with poverty, wealth, and virtue.

The book is not without small problems. Desmond accepts, without addressing recent criticism, M.I. Finley's primitivistic theory of Greek economics. A five-chapter tome in which one chapter forms half the book needs further editing. An incomplete subject index and the absence of an *index locorum*, especially in a work of this type, are regrettable. The Greek font is, at best, messy.

And what of this new story of poverty and virtue? To the Greeks we turn again and again, not in some vain pursuit of knowledge, but to illuminate how best to live. Do we find here yet one more case, as Nietzsche would argue, where the Greeks are wholly foreign to us? Certainly the virtue of poverty was not foreign to Jesus; camels are still large and the eyes of needles small. Diogenes and St. Paul agree: The love of money is the mother, the root, of all evil. St. Francis lived his life in strict accordance with the virtue. Modernity still knows it. Gray and Goldsmith, in their magnificent paeans to rural life, impoverished yet virtuous, relate its nobility. And Thoreau, standing at the door of our age, elucidates, for the first time since the Cynics, the philosophical centrality of the virtue of poverty.

But could Dickens, who was publishing *A Christmas Carol* as Thoreau contemplated moving out to the local pond, comprehend such a virtue? Can we, now that poverty itself is a condition in need of eradication or amelioration, when its stories, revolving around some type of failure, stress the lack of conscious choice? We all know those stories.

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Blind Justice

An Eye for an Eye
by William Ian Miller
Cambridge University Press, 278 pages, $28

Reviewed by Justin Shubow

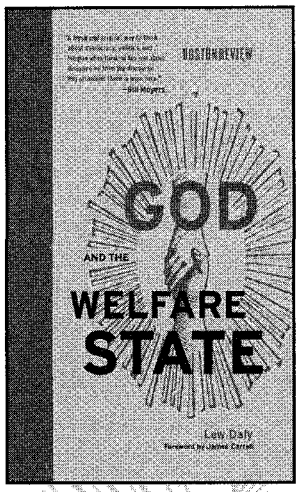
"An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" is not a principle of punishment—or, at least, it was not originally. As William Ian Miller shows in *An Eye for an Eye*, the *lex talionis*, or law of retaliation, was first and foremost a principle of compensation, a rule that applied to both intentional and accidental harms. By clearing up this common misconception, he wishes not only to rescue the *talion* from its barbaric reputation but also to show that, in some respects, it was positively humane.

A professor of law at the University of Michigan whose previous books concerned topics as disparate as courage, disgust, and Icelandic blood feuds, Miller here offers an "antitheory of justice," a concrete, unsystematic look at how people historically have perceived and achieved justice through revenge. To the extent that there is a unifying theme in this meandering but fascinating essay, it is that the mercantile diction of obligation—of payback and owning up, of settling accounts and obtaining redemption—cuts to the heart of our deepest intuitions about right and wrong. So, too, does the closely related language of measurement and valuation. We speak of making whole, sizing up, getting even, meting out—all of which Miller takes as evidence that corrective justice is fundamentally about restoring balance, of evening the scales. He shows that even our grammatical discourse, as in "*even* now" or "*just* awoke," contains an implicit conception of morality. Miller is clearly entranced by what he takes to be the near magical significance of words and their history, and he is disappointed when an etymology is not what he would wish it to be.

Underlying his method is the assumption that a moral framework can be embedded in ordinary language. By studying our speech, he hopes to reveal the metaphors we live by. The biblical *talion*, Miller emphasizes, is nothing if not powerful rhetoric. Although the essence of the same principle is seen in earlier legal texts, such as the Code of Hammurabi, it is only in the Bible that the law of retaliation is found in its crystalline form. Chilling and fearsome is its cadence: "Thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe." Although later in the Torah two slightly altered versions appear (the last of which, he admits, pertains to punishment), it is significant that both include eyes and teeth. Indeed, by the time Jesus refers to it, the *talion* had reached its most famous, lapidary form of just eyes and teeth. Why these two particular body parts? Miller speculates that their pairing juxtaposes that of great value with that of small, as well as the soft and vulnerable with the hard and sharp. Both are also sensuous, on the face, and easily plucked or extracted. Most important, however, both possess clear boundaries.

Having recognizable boundaries is essential since, in Miller's view, the *talion* is about measuring out accurate compensation. He offers ample evidence that human bodies and body parts were used as payment and collateral in the ancient world. Thus it was not always figurative to pay an arm and a leg or to demand one's pound of flesh. One of Miller's most penetrating observations is that the *talion* humanely created an effective initial bargaining position out of fellow-feeling: If I come to take your eye in payment for your having taken

Justin Shubow *is a student at Yale Law School.*



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mine, I will be able to demand the amount of money you are willing to pay to *keep* yours. That price should be a just one, since the value you ascribe to your imagined pain and loss should roughly equal the actual harm already done to me. In addition to these functions, instituting the *talion* also had the benefit of bringing the poor under the ambit of the law by giving them assets with which to satisfy claims. Though it may sound paradoxical at first, giving the poor the ability to be sued made them better off, for no one wants to do business with the judgment-proof.

Another generally unrecognized consequence of the *talion* is that it makes accidental harms costly, probably even overly so. Against Gandhi's retort that an eye for an eye would make the whole world blind (which, oddly, is not mentioned in the book), Miller would note that, in a *talionic* society, rational people are actually likely to be incredibly careful when it comes to other people's eyes and teeth. This idea was taken to its logical extreme in the striking case of medieval Icelandic law, which stated, "There shall be no such thing as accidents." In fact, Miller contends the inordinate cost of accidents in *talionic* societies discouraged risky but productive behavior and, hence, is what tended to keep them poor.

Although history is murky as to when and where people first stopped literally applying the *talion*, it is a particularly intriguing question as to whether it was a dead letter in ancient Israel. After all, we see no actual eyes or teeth paid over in the Bible, and the prohibition (found in Numbers) on accepting satisfaction in the case of homicide or manslaughter suggests that, at that time, compensation already tended to be favored over actual body parts. Thus, Miller thinks it was by no means a stretch for the early rabbis to have interpreted the *talion* as permitting only money as compensation.

While the intimate connection between compensation and the law of retaliation is an essential element in Miller's study, he also emphasizes that *talionic* societies tended to be honor cultures. A central feature of these cultures was that they ranked people ruthlessly: The Norse called it "man-comparing." Such societies conceptualized honor in terms of debt and credit, and they considered taking revenge to be the optimal form of recompense. Yet even when monetary compensation was available (which at least bought a temporary respite from cycles of violence), it is curious that payback in blood tended to be preferred. The Vikings, for instance, sneered at those who "carried their kin in their purse."

Miller attributes this preference for blood largely to the aesthetic component of revenge. Justice is most satisfying when it is properly poetic. It was Homer himself who observed that revenge is sweet. From the *Odyssey* to *Beowulf* to *Dirty Harry*, the universal popularity of revenge fantasies points to the psychical satisfaction they provide. In one of the highlights of the book, Miller surveys various cultures' tastes in revenge and finds general agreement that ideal avenging requires the passage of time, but otherwise there is widespread disagreement over whether it is a dish best served hot or cold, publicly or privately, for the sake of teaching a lesson or merely to cause bafflement. While emphasizing the importance of the aesthetics of revenge, Miller finds it highly significant that many revenge myths contain implicit warnings about taking the aesthetics too far. This is even a recurring theme in the James Bond movies—the villains' desire to humiliate and kill Bond in a complicated, excessive manner inevitably backfires.

Despite admitting that, like other academics, he is too much of a coward to have succeeded in these honor cultures, Miller is not afraid to confess his admiration for what he calls their talent for justice. Honor cultures allowed men to fulfill their natural desire for revenge while still restraining its exercise within manageable limits. Miller takes it as self-evident that members of honor cultures felt greater satisfaction with the results of their justice system than we do, and he implicitly takes this as evidence of their moral skill. Unlike us lazy, unimaginative moderns, who relegate perfect justice to art or the afterlife, members of honor cultures sought and achieved it in the real world.

Partly out of a wish to *épater les professeurs* (he confesses that the book is his small revenge on complacent academic moralizers) and partly due to his thirty-year immersion in the study of Icelandic blood feuds, Miller is far too sanguine when evaluating honor cultures. He clearly admires medieval Iceland, but, even if it was as functional and orderly as he claims, its example alone (and it was an unusually sophisticated honor culture) does not belie the conventional wisdom that revenge is a dangerous force unless severely constrained. Likewise, he shows insufficient concern for the well-being of those of low status in honor cultures: those—such as widows, orphans, and the poor—who, he concedes, were not even permitted to play the "honor game." Their only hope for justice lay in God the Redeemer—and thus it was an epochal moment when Jesus counseled us to turn the other cheek in response to an insulting slap, for his act represents the utter rejection of honor-culture values.

But Miller likely does not intend his sweeping generalizations to be taken too seriously. Indeed, that he occasionally plays fast and loose with his language (for instance, in one place he writes that "*talionic* cultures tended to be honor cultures," in another that "*talionic* cultures were invariably honor cultures") reminds us that this is not a work of moral philosophy but a meditative essay. And by the standards of that genre—

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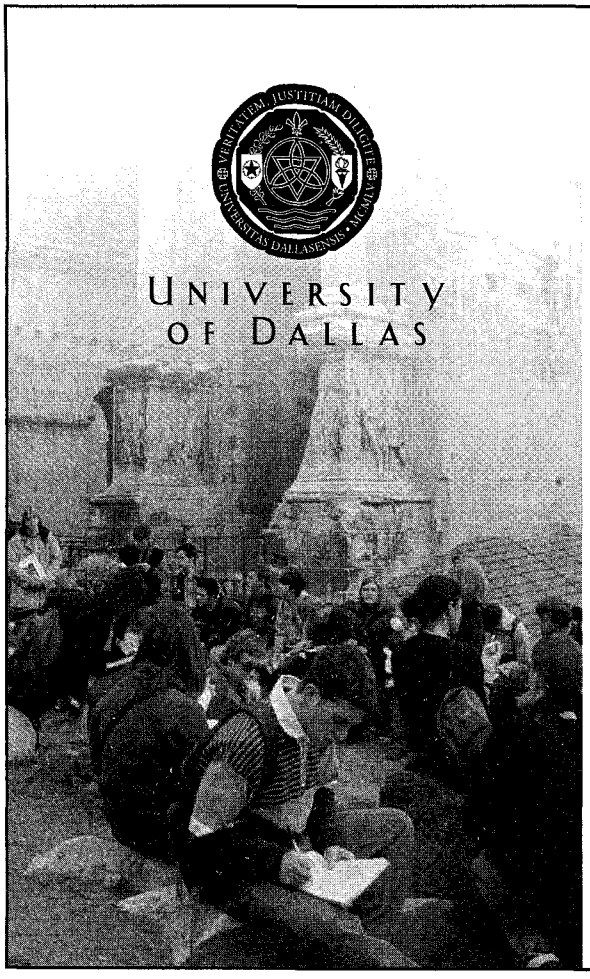
which readers turn to for insight, not rigor, for the stimulation of thought rather than conclusions—he thoroughly succeeds.

Briefly Noted

Ambrose's Patriarchs: Ethics for the Common Man
by Marcia L. Colish
University of Notre Dame Press, 208 pages, $15 (paper)

Unless one is a regular and diligent reader of the Pentateuch, the stories of the patriarchs in Genesis are known chiefly through vignettes: Abraham and Sarah learning they would have a son in old age, Isaac being led to sacrifice by his father Abraham, Jacob depriving his brother Esau of his birthright, Joseph resisting the blandishments of Potiphar's wife. Yet the tales of the patriarchs in the book of Genesis offer rich narratives of individual lives, fuller than those of most other biblical heroes save the great kings of Israel. Ambrose seems to have been one of the few early Christian teachers to realize the potential of these stories for moral instruction, and Marcia Colish, professor emeritus of history at Oberlin, is the first scholar to grasp what can be made for modern readers of Ambrose's four treatises on the patriarchs. The result is an original and suggestive book. She shows that Ambrose chose the patriarchs as subjects for exegetical talks (following the order of the text of Genesis) to catechumens who were soon to be baptized. In contrast to his other ethical treatises that focus on such specifics as vocations, virginity, and priesthood, these were addressed to men and women who were married, breadwinners, parents, and active in civic affairs. To introduce them to their new way of life, Ambrose chose models they could emulate and about whose deeds he could speak in specifics, not simply appeal to general principles or precepts. The message is that virtue is acquired over time and the path to a mature moral life is gradual and incremental. Colish's insight is that in these treatises Ambrose present an ethics for the common man, a morality for faithful Christians who live in the world. This is not the conventional picture of Ambrose, but Colish knows what she is about, and her new book sheds a fresh beam of light on a beloved early Christian bishop.

—Robert Louis Wilken



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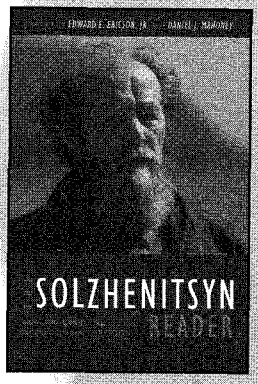

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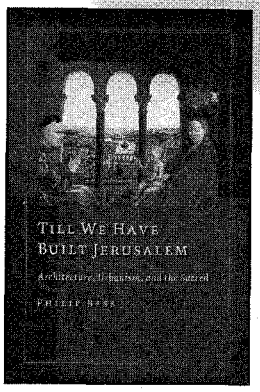

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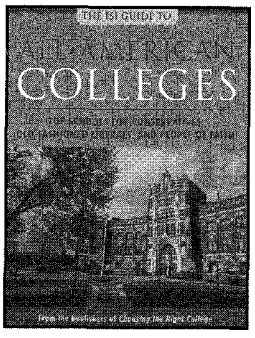

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Who Owns the Bible? Toward the Recovery of a Christian Hermeneutic
by Karl Donfried
Herder & Herder, 176 pages, $19.95

A spirited inquiry into contemporary Biblical interpretation, *Who Owns the Bible?* examines tendentious methods of reading the Bible in many of the mainline churches—which resulted in the introduction of an "alien hermeneutic" (that compromises the more rigorous demands of Christianity with a less judgmental "theology of inclusion") and a weakening of densely textured articles of faith in favor of an affirmation of the Triune God as simply "a God of love." By avoiding the difficult task of discovering how that love is to be worked out in the moral life, much of current mainline thinking falls prey to various forms of relativism. And, in the end, what the churches offer the modern world are various forms of "cheap grace" that Dietrich Bonhoeffer criticized. Inclusive theologies have a difficult time with the high demands the Bible places on the believer; the Pauline maxim that one should work out one's salvation with fear and trembling no longer has much resonance. Almost half the book is spent on how the Gospel of Matthew and the Pauline letters depict the moral life. The key points of departure are the way Matthew understands discipleship and Paul depicts justification. In both, Donfried sees the need to balance the electing hand of God that calls the Christian to enter the Kingdom with the gradual training in the life of virtue. On this view, justification by faith does not rule out good works; indeed, "good works" are the fruits of the spirit that will mark one's life as transformed on the day of judgment. Salvation, in this view, is not an accomplished fact here and now. As Paul develops the concept, it must be understood as a radically eschatological affair that is solely in the hands of God. To be saved at the last judgment, one must hold fast to one's faith and new life in Christ. To speak of being saved right now (as evangelical idiom is fond of putting the matter) is an error in theological grammar. There is also an extended discussion of what a biblical approach to the problem of homosexuality might look like. It was a bit surprising that no mention was made of Richard Hays' contributions on this subject, since his approach is both well known and quite similar to that of Donfried.

—Gary A. Anderson

Michael Oakeshott on Religion, Aesthetics, and Politics
by Elizabeth Campbell Corey
University of Missouri Press, 253 pages, $39.95

American interest in Michael Oakeshott's work has been steadily increasing over the past decade, with the appearance of a significant number of dissertations, essays, and monographs on his work. Much of this is attributable to a group of remarkable younger scholars, such as Elizabeth Corey of Baylor University. Oakeshott was the leading British political philosopher of the twentieth century. His analysis of Hobbes, his skeptical conservatism, his critiques of arationalism and ideology, and his theory of civil association and the rule of law are the most widely known and discussed elements of his thought. Now, with access to his notebooks and papers in the library of the London School of Economics, analyses of his ideas on religion and aesthetics have also begun to proliferate. An expert on these aspects of his thought, Corey introduces comparisons of, for example, Oakeshott's critique of arationalism with Eric Voegelin's critiques of agnosticism. This is a welcome extension of the terrain in which Oakeshott's (and Voegelin's) work is perceived. Oakeshott was a man of romantic spirit with an unconventional but deeply felt religious sensibility. He was a philosopher realistic about the human condition, but one discerns the poetic spirit in his prose that often transfigures the quotidian without disguising it. Oakeshott thought that preoccupation with politics is a mistake: Politics is to keep the ship afloat so that we are free to pursue the meaning of life elsewhere. Corey captures this with clarity and lucidity. A most worthy contribution.

—Timothy Fuller

Conversations with Poppi About God
by Robert W. Jenson and Solveig Lucia Gold
Brazos, 160 pages, $18.99

One of our favorite theologians responds to questions by his granddaughter about the really big things. Our editor in chief, who is also the girl's godfather, says this on the dust jacket: "Eight-year-old theologians are not so rare as we might think, but few have a theologian grandfather with the patience and learning to appreciate their profundity. Readers will thank Solveig and Poppi for their winsome engagement with the surprising simplicity of Christian wisdom." Father Neuhaus says he stands by that.

By a Slow River
by Philippe Claudel
Knopf, 208 pages, $23

Set in a French village close to, but tenuously protected from, the trench warfare of World War I, this relentlessly desolate story of murder, loneliness, the petty abuse of power, and general human beastliness will be relished by those few who share the narrator's (and author's?) belief that life is a series of tragedies to be remedied, however unsatisfactorily, by death and, if necessary, by suicide.

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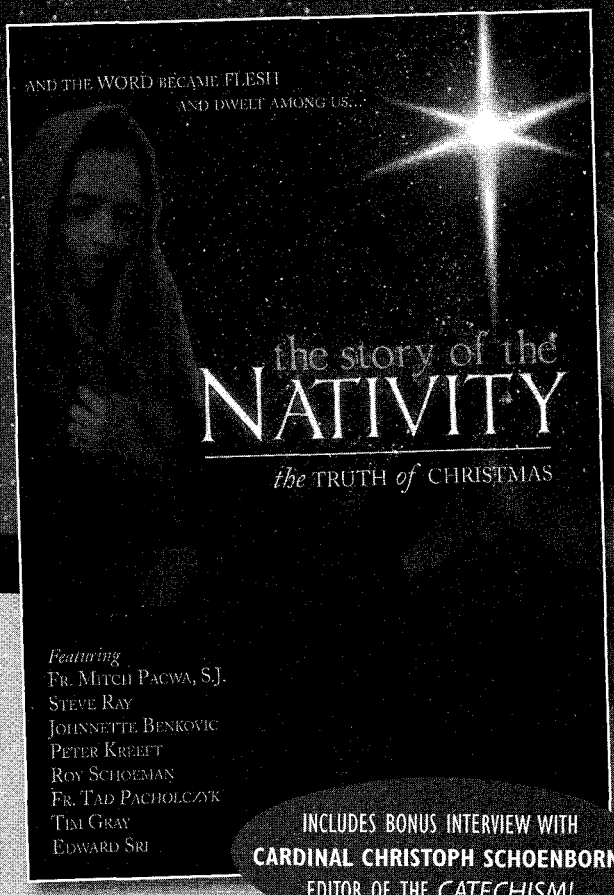

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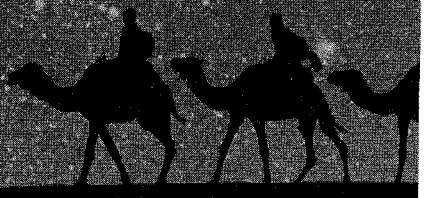

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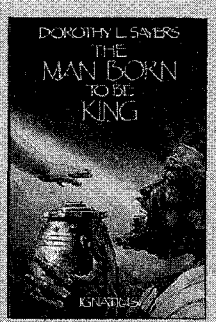

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The Public Square

A Continuing Survey of Religion, Culture, and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

Those Uncaring Conservatives

There are little exchanges that stick in memory. It was a conversation many years ago with Eugene Carson Blake. He was then the oldline Protestant establishment's main man in just about everything, beginning with the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the National Council of Churches. Blake was complaining one day about the lack of compassion among conservatives who whined about high taxes. "I love to pay taxes," he said. "Taxes are the way we help government to help people. I wish I could pay twice as much in income tax as I do." Being very much his junior, I hesitantly suggested that the Treasury Department would gladly accept his check for the extra money he wanted to give the government. "That," he dismissively responded, "would be quixotic. In a just society, I would be *required* to pay higher taxes." I suggested that one might view it not as quixotic but as a way in which he could set a good example. The conversation then turned to other matters.

The notion that liberals are caring and compassionate while conservatives are selfish and hard-hearted is still being peddled long after its sell-by date. For instance, a day hardly passes that one does not read an article about the need for evangelical Protestants or Catholics to close the gap between the conservative pro-life cause and the liberal "social justice agenda." I am always puzzled by that way of putting the question. First, because there is no more elementary cause of social justice than reforming a society that permits the killing of millions of its babies. Second, because of the implied assumption that liberals care more about helping the already born who are in need. That is counterintuitive, and counter to my experience with the many liberals and conservatives whom I have known.

But, in case there is any doubt, we need not rely on intuition or anecdotal experience. There is a growing literature demonstrating that conservatives are much more generous in helping people in need than are liberals. The record of those further to the left than liberal is even clearer. In our little book of 1975, *To Empower People*, Peter Berger and I argued that effective help required a major role for "mediating institutions," meaning the nongovernmental and people-sized associations—for example, families, churches, voluntary groups of all kinds—through which people routinely care for one another and for others in distant lands.

Arthur C. Brooks is professor of public administration at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University. He employs the argument of *To Empower People* and supports it with massive statistical data and the most detailed analysis. The title of his new book is *Who Really Cares: The Surprising Truth About Compassionate Conservatism: America's Charity Divide—Who Gives, Who Doesn't, and Why It Matters*. It is just out from Basic Books and is deserving of widespread attention.

Prof. Brooks started his study some years ago with the conventional assumption that liberals cared and conservatives didn't. He wanted to find out why that

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should be. What he found out is that the assumption is dead wrong. Quite the opposite is the case, and very dramatically so. Measured by the giving of money, time, and practical help, those who by the usual criteria are defined as conservative are way, way ahead of their liberal cousins. That is true in support for both religious and nonreligious programs for helping those in need.

In his foreword, the eminent social scientist James Q. Wilson says, "[T]his is the best study of charity that I have read." For many on the left, charity is a dirty word. What we need, they say, is justice, not charity, which then excuses them from the tasks of charity. Other Americans, however, give more than a quarter trillion dollars a year to charity, not counting the gift of time and practical help. Not incidentally, the poor are, relative to their resources, more generous than the rich. (The well-to-do are much more likely to say they "cannot afford" to give in helping others.) "These statistics are impressive, and belie most of the claims about the selfishness of our nation," writes Brooks. "That said, an identifiable and sizeable minority of Americans are *not* charitable. While 225 million Americans give away money each year, the other 75 million *never* give away money to any causes, charities, or churches. Further, 130 million Americans never volunteer their time."

When one runs all the data and the all the variables through the various analytical grids, it turns out that there are four factors that drive generosity to others. First, the caring are more religiously committed than those who do not give of their time and money. Second, they believe that helping others is more a personal than governmental responsibility. Third, they come from strong families where they have learned the virtue of generosity. And fourth, they believe in helping people to help themselves.

Toward the end of his book, Prof. Brooks sums up "the five major facts about charity and politics." "First, there is a huge 'charity gap' that follows religion: On average, religious people are far more charitable than secularists with their time and money. Religious people are more generous in informal ways as well, such as giving blood, giving money to family members, and behaving honestly. Religious people are far more likely than secularists to be politically conservative. Second, people who believe—as liberals often do—that the government should equalize income give and volunteer far less than people who do not believe this. Third, the American working poor are, relative to their income, very generous. The nonworking poor, however—those on public assistance instead of earning low wages—give at extremely low levels. The charitable working poor tend to be far more politically conservative than the nonworking poor. Fourth, charitable giving is learned, reinforced, and practiced within intact families—especially religious families. Secularism and family breakdown are far less prevalent among conservatives than liberals. Fifth, Europeans are far less personally charitable than people in the U.S. Europeans are also, on average, far to the political left of Americans. The net result of these five facts is that conservatives generally behave more charitably than liberals, especially with respect to money donations."

There are all kinds of interesting vignettes along the way of reading *Who Really Cares*. For instance, people in the rich county of San Francisco give but a small fraction of the time and money given by the relatively poor people of South Dakota. And there are interesting
transcultural comparisons of the correlation between religion, generosity, and how people rate their own happiness. American liberals, along with Europeans, are generally much more unhappy with their lives.

Brooks doesn't say so, but one reason for their unhappiness may be their resentment of the happiness of conservatives. Liberals tend to be much angrier than conservatives. Of course, they might say that is because conservatives don't understand what is wrong with the world. That seems very doubtful. What this study does make clear is that, apart from being angry about it, liberals are much less inclined than conservatives to accept personal responsibility for doing something about what is wrong with the world.

The next time you find yourself in a conversation about how liberals are caring and compassionate while conservatives are selfish and hard-hearted, you might want to refer your interlocutors to *Who Really Cares*. To be entirely fair, this is social science, and social science deals in generalizations. Need I say that some of my best friends are liberals who are wonderfully generous?

FT

Bonhoeffer Today

The Church's mandate to be "in but not of the world" has been occasion for much confusion and contention for two thousand years and will likely continue to be until the Kingdom comes. Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer worked creatively with the Lutheran idea of the "two kingdoms" or, more precisely, the two-fold rule of God in history. His opposition to the Third Reich, for which he was executed on April 9, 1945, was based on that regime's violation of the divinely mandated dis-

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tinction between Church and civil government. Christians must oppose the notion of a "confessing state," whether its confession be Christian or, as in the case of National Socialism, the pseudo-religion of blood and soil. The Church's mission is to proclaim, not to govern. "The peculiar character of the Church . . . lies in the fact that in the very limitation of her spiritual and material domain she gives expression to the unlimited scope of the message of Christ." Writing in his *Ethics*, Bonhoeffer continues:

> It is with this particular "community" that we must now concern ourselves, and we must first turn our attention to the necessary distinction between this and the divine mandate of proclamation. The word of God, proclaimed by a virtue of a divine mandate, dominates and rules the entire world; the "community" which comes into being around this word does not dominate the world, but it stands entirely in the service of the fulfillment of the divine mandate. The law of this "community" cannot and must not ever become the law of the worldly order, for by doing so it would be establishing an alien rule; conversely the law of a worldly order cannot and must not ever become the law of this community. Thus the peculiarity of the divine mandate of the Church lies in the fact that the proclamation of the lordship of Christ over the whole world must always be distinguished from the "law" of the Church as a community, while on the other hand the Church as a community is not to be separated from the office of proclamation.

While We're At It

■ A book that has generated considerable controversy is at last available in English. Unfortunately, it will probably not get much attention. It is put out by the relatively obscure Roman Catholic Books of Fort Collins, Florida, and I expect the reason is that no effort was made to edit it into a form attuned to an American audience. The language and references are narrowly Germanic, although the argument has a more universal reach. The book is *The Reform of the Roman Liturgy: Its Problems and Background* by Klaus Gamber. The late Klaus Gamber was a priest and liturgical scholar, and this is his *cri de coeur* about all that has gone wrong with Catholic worship since the Second Vatican Council. A more accurate title might be *The Displacement of the Roman Liturgy*, for his argument is that the *Novus Ordo*, decreed—with doubtful authority, according to Gamber—by Paul VI, established a Modern Rite that has effectively displaced the Roman Rite followed since at least the fourth century. (We should not, he insists, speak of the Tridentine Mass nor of the Mass of Paul V, since Trent and Paul V made but minor and needed modifications of the old Roman Rite.) Gamber makes a strong case against the now almost universal practice of the priest facing the people from behind the altar. That, he contends, is not supported, as is often claimed, by the practice of the early Church, not even by the practice in the early Roman basilicas. From earliest times, both priest and people faced *ad orientem*—toward the East, toward the rising sun, toward God. There is growing criticism today of what has come with the practice of the priest facing the people (*versus populum*), namely, the encouragement of the idea that the priest is a performer on a stage rather than the leader and mediator, *in persona Christi*, of the Church's worship. People from many different theological perspectives have claimed that the liturgical changes of recent decades have been more in the nature of a revolution than a reform. From an outsider's perspective, sociologist Peter L. Berger, a Lutheran, wrote years ago, "If a thoroughly malicious sociologist, bent on injuring the Catholic community as much as possible had been an adviser to the Church, he could hardly have done a better job." That may be putting it too strongly, but Klaus Gamber and an increasing number of Catholics, including liturgical scholars, would agree with Berger.

■ Today much is heard of the need for "a reform of the reform." The rite decreed in 1969 is frequently called "the Bugnini Mass." Father (later Archbishop) Annibale Bugnini, who died in 1982, was an enigmatic figure who was in and out of favor over the years and then was appointed by Paul VI to head a commission that would come up with a revised—or, as others would have it, a new—rite for the universal Church. At the direction of John Paul II, he ended his remarkable career in exile, as nuncio to Iran. People also speak of "Bugnini time," referring to his drastic reordering of the Church's liturgical calendar, including all those Sundays "in ordinary time."

■ It has been regularly reported that Pope Benedict intends some major moves with respect to the liturgy, including a carte blanche permission for the use of the old Roman Rite, alongside the rite of 1969. So far he has not done that, although over the years Cardinal Ratzinger made no secret of his dissatisfaction with what was done under Paul VI. In the preface to the French edition of Klaus Gamber's book, Ratzinger wrote: "One cannot manufacture a liturgical movement but one can contribute to its develop-

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ment. . . . J.A. Jungmann, one of the truly great liturgists of our century, defined the liturgy of his time, such as it could be understood in the light of historical research, as 'a liturgy which is the fruit of development.' . . . What happened after the Council was something else entirely: in the place of liturgy as the fruit of development came fabricated liturgy. We abandoned the organic, living process of growth and development over centuries, and replaced it—as in a manufacturing process—with a fabrication, a banal on-the-spot product. [Gamber] showed us the multiple forms and paths of liturgical development; as a man who looked at history from the inside, he saw in this development and its fruit the intangible reflection of the eternal liturgy, that which is not the object of our action but which can continue marvelously to mature and blossom if we unite ourselves intimately with its mystery." It seems more than likely that this pontificate will witness some major steps toward implementing the insights so strongly and repeatedly articulated by the former Cardinal Ratzinger.

■ I expect that the pope will not flirt with Gamber's claim that the Roman Rite was displaced in 1969. If the rumors are right, the permission will likely be framed in terms of two versions of the Roman Rite. Then there is the question of the new liturgical calendar established in 1969. It is hard to see how a universal church could live by two different calendars. Of course, a major purpose of such an initiative would be to reconcile the Lefebvrists and other "traditionalists" who have long opposed the 1969 rite. Any priest can now say the *Novus Ordo* in Latin, but few do. My hunch is that the new directive from Benedict, if indeed it is on the way, will have little immediate effect on worship in most parishes. But it could be a significant move in slowly turning the Church toward a "reform of the reform."

■ Prof. John Esposito of Georgetown University, an institution "in the Jesuit tradition," is a notable champion of interreligious dialogue. He has written prodigiously in promoting an understanding of Islam as a religion of peace. Now, for a select few, he is leading a pilgrimage billed as "Great Faiths: A Journey by Private Jet to the World's Sacred Places." Rome and Jerusalem are on the itinerary, along with Varanasi, Kyoto, Lhasa, Amritsar, Lalibela, Cairo, and Istanbul —sites sacred to Hindu, Shinto, Buddhist, Muslim, and also Christian religions. The price is $42,950 per person. By booking early, you can save $2,100, thus bringing this spiritual "adventure" within the reach of those who might otherwise find traveling the world by private jet financially prohibitive. The brochure does not say whether food and accommodations are included in the price, but when offered a twenty-three-day adventure by private jet and "an intimate look at the world's great faiths as you travel comfortably, safely, and conveniently through nine exotic countries," this is no time for penny-pinching. Then, too, as Prof. Esposito never tires of reminding us, think of the contribution you will be making to interreligious understanding.

■ I see the latest volume of *The Best American Spiritual Writing* is out from Houghton Mifflin. Once again, editor Philip Zaleski has done a splendid job of combing through thousands of essays published in the last year and selecting those that, just maybe, will be read years from now. The spiritual sensibility, writes Zaleski, is attuned to Pascal's dictum that we dwell between two abysses, the Infinite and the Nothing, that every person is a "nothing in comparison with the infinite, an all in comparison with the nothing, a mean between nothing and everything." Spiritual writing may "on rare occasions, even hand us the keys to our existence." "Everyone has, or should have, one or two such works to cherish through a lifetime. C.S. Lewis, young and old, sought wisdom in George MacDonald's fantasies, while Gabriel Betteredge, the unforgettable house steward in Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone*, relies upon the miraculous powers of *Robinson Crusoe*: 'Such a book as *Robinson Crusoe* never was written, and never will be written again. I have tried that book for years—generally in combination with a pipe of tobacco—and I have found it my friend in need in all the necessities of this mortal life. When my spirits are bad—*Robinson Crusoe*. When I want advice—*Robinson Crusoe*. In past times when my wife plagued me; in present times when I have had a drop too much—*Robinson Crusoe*. I have worn out six stout *Robinson Crusoes* with hard work in my service. On my lady's last birthday she gave me a seventh. I took a drop too much on the strength of it; and *Robinson Crusoe* put me right again.'" Keep in mind that the *Robinson Crusoe* that Betteredge read is not the bowdlerized version familiar to most people today. Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is a profoundly Christian narrative of the drama of man and God and the struggles of salvation. To understand what happened to the story over the years, check out "The Strange Shipwreck of Robinson Crusoe" in the May 1995 issue of FIRST THINGS by, of course, Philip Zaleski. If, like Betteredge, you need to be put right again, make sure you're reading the real *Robinson Crusoe*.

■ The university chaplain at Harvard is Peter J. Gomes, and he writes the introduction to *The Best American Spiritual Writing*. He says this: "My experi-

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ence of more than thirty-five years at Harvard allows me to observe that probably more people today are engaged in some regular form of religious practice at Harvard than at any point since the American Revolution. The practice and the practitioners are very different from those white Anglo-Saxon Protestants of a century ago, but because there is more cultural diversity present in the college than in the past, there is also more religious practice. Diversity has broken the cultural tension between the religious and the secular, for where there are wider options and experiences, people are not forced to fight the nineteenth-century European battles of belief versus unbelief, but are able to take advantage of what the far-seeing William James once called the 'varieties of religious experience.' America allows people to be religious in ways previously not available to them in other countries. Freedom presupposes choice, and the exercise of freedom allows people to be religious or not religious, as the case may be, and in different ways, one of which is what we call 'spirituality.' How often have we heard a person say, 'I'm not religious, but I'm spiritual'? The argument suggests that religion imposes a set of doctrinal beliefs and the ethical behaviors that spring from it: conviction leads to conduct, belief influences behavior. An ingredient in most religious practice is the conviction that the practices and beliefs of that particular tradition are the only valid ones, and this can lead to an arrogance of opinion based on absolute and exclusive truth claims. When these claims conflict, as they must in a pluralistic world, there appears to be a choice only between a demoralizing relativism and a fundamental conflict with the 'other' that leads either to conversion or to extinction. When people speak of religion as the source of all serious trouble in the world, they usually have this rather grim scenario in mind, and, alas, the history of the world and its political and cultural conflicts tend to confirm this pessimistic view of religion's role in human affairs." He is surely right that extermination, conversion, and demoralizing relativism are not the only options. The best of options is a particular tradition with truth claims that exclude contradictory truth claims and include the truth claim that the dignity of the human person means that all human beings, no matter how erroneous their beliefs, are to be engaged with love and respect.

■ While we're at it, I notice that again this year the *New Yorker*, with four essays, is in first place and FIRST THINGS is in second place with three: Wilfred McClay's "The Secret of the Self," Robert Louis Wilken's "The Church's Way of Speaking," and my "Our American Babylon." There are thirty-five essays all together.

■ The story originally appeared in the *Palestine Post* (now the *Jerusalem Post*) of April 28, 1944. Then it was forgotten over all these years that people have been slanderously going on about the "silence," even the anti-Semitism, of Pope Pius XII during the Hitler years. Here is the story: "The Jewish author attended a papal audience in the autumn of 1941. He entered the papal chamber along with numerous other people, including a group of German soldiers. (It was common for soldiers to visit the Pope early in the war era. Later, when Hitler learned of what the Pope told them, he put an end to this practice.) The author was the final individual to approach the Pope that day. He wanted to tell Pius about a group of Jews who were saved from a shipwreck but were now being interned by Italy's Fascist government on an island, in danger of starvation. He tried to speak in broken Italian but the Pope invited him to use his native language, assuming that it would be German. 'You are German, too, aren't you?' asked the Pope. The author then explained that he was born in Germany, but he was a Jew. Pius invited the author to finish his story. He listened intently then said: 'You have done well to come to me and tell me this. I have heard about it before. Come back tomorrow with a written report and give it to the Secretary of State who is dealing with the question. But now for you, my son. You are a young Jew. I know what that means and I hope you will always be proud to be a Jew!' Pius then raised his voice so that everyone in the hall—including the German soldiers—could hear it and said (in a 'pleasant voice'): 'My son, whether you are worthier than others only the Lord knows, but believe me, you are at least as worthy as every other human being that lives on our earth! And now, my Jewish friend, go with the protection of the Lord, and never forget, you must always be proud to be a Jew!'" As William Doino, who has done intense research on Pius XII, says, much better known is the statement of Pius XI when addressing a group of Belgian pilgrims in 1938: "No, it is not possible for Christians to take part in anti-Semitism. Spiritually, we are all Semites." Doino has an extensive commentary on the significance of Pius XII's words and the actions that followed in the November issue of *Inside the Vatican*.

■ The editors of the *Christian Century* are distressed by Pope Benedict's "faux pas" in that Regensburg lecture that upset so many Muslims. "To many non-Christians," they observe, "he speaks for all Christians. As he has probably learned, he has to choose his words very carefully." The pope will no doubt be grateful for the advice. The editors note that some complain about a double standard: "When leaders in

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the Muslim world make outrageous comments—like denials of the Holocaust—they are met with critical articles on the op-ed page. When a Western leader makes a scholarly comment critical of Islam, the Muslim world erupts in violent protest." The editors allow that "there may be some truth to this observation." They agree with John Danforth, the former senator, that "a forum should be created in which leaders of the world's religions could work together to address pressing issues." Why didn't anyone think of that before? The editorial is titled "Making Amends," meaning that Pope Benedict should make amends. Some complain that the editorial mind of the *Century* is suffering from terminal niceness, although not in the treatment of the pope. "There may be some truth to this observation."

■ Timothy Fuller's review of Andrew Sullivan's *The Conservative Soul* appeared in our October issue. Now Jean Bethke Elshtain has a go at the book in *Commonweal*. According to Sullivan, those who do not think that doubt is the noblest of virtues—for instance, people associated with this magazine—are "fundamentalists." Sullivan insists upon the minimalist state that has no business protecting human life in any way except "providing for the common defense." Elshtain writes, "How Sullivan squares his view of the minimalist state with energetic state-sanctioned legitimation and enforcement of gay marriage entitlements via judicial fiat is never made clear." Sullivan professes himself to be a great admirer of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher as people who understood, and acted in accord with, "the conservative soul." Elshtain writes: "Sullivan insists we can defend a 'thin' procedural vision of secular American democracy against fundamentalist threats by saying things like: 'We like it here' and 'This is our kind of place.' (And by deploying a strong military to protect that place.) What might his beloved Reagan and the formidable Lady Thatcher say to such an anemic defense of democracy? I have a hunch it would be rather tart."

■ "From a Catholic point of view, the contemporary secular university is not at fault because it is not Catholic. It is at fault insofar as it is not a university." So says the distinguished philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre of Notre Dame, writing in *Commonweal*. Catholic universities, he writes, are uncritically aspiring to imitate their secular betters. "So we find Notre Dame glancing nervously at Duke, only to catch Duke in the act of glancing nervously at Princeton." What is wrong with universities more generally, he says, is their fragmentation into disciplines, subdisciplines, and subsubdisciplines, with nobody attending to knowledge of the human condition as a whole. Academic success depends upon identification with one of the fragments. "That identification is secured by two successive apprenticeships, one aimed at the PhD, and a second aimed at achieving tenure. During both what is rewarded is the successful completion of those short-term tasks approved by their seniors. So respect for the prejudices of those seniors is inculcated, while long-term adventurous risk-taking and unfashionable projects tend to go unrewarded, and are therefore increasingly rarely undertaken. In this way many academics are conditioned to become respectful guardians of the disciplinary status quo, sometimes disguising this from themselves by an enthusiasm for those interdisciplinary projects that present no threat to that status quo." Nobody is responsible for making the connections between all the parts of university education. MacIntyre writes: "Ours is a culture in which there is the sharpest of contrasts between the rigor and integrity with which issues of detail are discussed within each specialized discipline and the self-indulgent shoddiness of so much of public debate on large and general issues of great import (compare Lawrence Summers on economics with Lawrence Summers on gender issues, Cardinal Schönborn on theology with Cardinal Schönborn on evolution)." As it happens, I think Cardinal Schönborn demonstrates a good deal of rigor and integrity in his approach to evolution, and I'm not sure what rigor and integrity means with respect to "gender issues." In the curriculum that MacIntyre has in mind, theology is key. "The adoption of such a curriculum would serve both universities and the wider society well. But it would be of particular significance for a Catholic university and for the Catholic community. Newman argued that it is theology that is the integrative and unifying discipline needed by *any* university, secular, Protestant, or Catholic. And it is in the light afforded by the Catholic faith and more especially by Catholic doctrines concerning human nature and the human condition that theologians have a unique contribution to make in addressing the questions that ought to be central to an otherwise secular curriculum. It is not just that Catholic theology has its own distinctive answers to those questions, but that we can learn from it a way of addressing those questions, not just as theoretical inquiries, but as questions with practical import for our lives, asked by those who are open to God's self-revelation. Theology can become an education in how to ask such questions." He is doubtful, however, that today's theology departments are up to the job, since they suffer from the same specialization and fragmentation that afflict other departments.

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Some will object that MacIntyre's vision shortchanges specialized training for research. To that concern, he responds: "The curriculum I am proposing, including theology, could perhaps be taught in three well-structured and strenuous years. A fourth year would thereby become available for research or professional training. We do not have to sacrifice training in research in order to provide our students with a liberal education, just as we do not have to fragment and deform so much of our students' education, as we do now." MacIntyre's critique of contemporary university education, while making no claims to be original, is convincing. The doleful fact, however, is that universities locked into the status quo are institutionally thriving and able to command ever higher fees for the certifications on offer. In discussions of these matters, Newman's *The Idea of a University* is regularly invoked, only to be set aside with the sigh, "Wouldn't that be nice?" Of course, there are many smaller colleges and universities, Catholic and other, that do make the connections that MacIntyre says is the university's job. They are commonly called "alternative" schools, and will likely remain alternatives to the established research universities that seem to have little incentive to change the institutionalized entrenchment of their accustomed and comfortable ways.

■ "Allah is my Lord and yours," President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran wrote to President Bush last May in a letter that said U.S. policy could not be squared with Christian or Muslim morality. Paul Griffiths of the University of Illinois at Chicago writes in the *Christian Century*, "This letter is a political document, of course, and like all such it is no doubt duplicitous, multilayered, and deliberately deceptive." Nonetheless, says Griffiths, let's imagine that Ahmadinejad means it. What would happen if we really believed that religious solidarity takes priority over the solidarity of citizenship? "But in fact," writes Griffiths, "almost none of us really believes this, as is evident in the fact that almost none of us would do—or even thinks we would do—for our coreligionists what deep solidarity demands. And what is that? It is to be ready to shed blood, our own or that of others, in their defense or service.... We American Christians all know, deep in our bones, that when it comes to the shedding of blood, citizenship trumps baptism." It is, I would suggest, a very good thing that we do not shed blood in the name of religion. The deep *communio* among Christians is to be found not in our shedding blood, whether ours or that of others, but in the shed blood of Christ. Shedding other blood, to the extent it is sometimes necessary, is the business of Caesar, not of Christ. Griffiths is worried, and rightly so, that American Christians make an idol of our nation. But then he adds: "America is just one more pagan nation, mired in blood up to the elbows; as such it is not very interesting. Paying attention to the imaginative challenge of Ahmadinejad's letter might help us to see this more clearly." Both Griffiths and Ahmadinejad appear to be conflating what Saint Augustine called the City of God and the city of man. Given the monistic mindset of Islam, one might suggest that there is more excuse for Ahmadinejad making that mistake. We do not demonstrate religious solidarity by shedding blood. And, not incidentally, while America is not the New Jerusalem or even the prolepsis of the New Jerusalem—and maybe not even the last best hope of earth (Lincoln)—it is more than one more pagan nation among others. Much more.

■ Ah, liberalism. Those of a certain age remember it well. James Nuechterlein, former editor of this magazine, begins a review this way: "Even now, a half-century later, one looks back with a certain nostalgia on the liberalism of the 1950s. Its characteristic cast of mind—pluralistic, ironic, mindful of complexity and tragic possibilities—continues to recommend itself. This was, all in all, a civilized politics in a civilized time, and the temptation to wish it back into existence, however unrealistic, is difficult to resist." Nuechterlein is reviewing *Richard Hofstadter: An Intellectual Biography* by David Brown, and he thinks it, all in all, a fine work. Hofstadter had started out very much on the left, even signing up with the Communist party for a few months before he was disillusioned by its anti-intellectualism. But he wasn't about to become a conservative. Nuechterlein writes: "Rejecting radicalism, Hofstadter did not thereby become a political conservative. For intellectuals of his generation, the Right was an unimaginable country, occupied, as it seemed to them, by McCarthyites, opponents of civil rights, and economic purists for whom any interference with market mechanisms was akin to socialism. For most on the Left, Lionel Trilling's dismissive summary of conservatism as an accumulation of 'irritable mental gestures' said all that needed saying." As professor of history at Columbia, Hofstadter exemplified what Arthur Schlesinger Jr. would call "the vital center." He won fame and influence with *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It* (1948) and, especially, *The Age of Reform* (1955), both of which won Pulitzer Prizes. Later he would publish *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (1963) and *The Paranoid Style in American Politics* (1965), both written against the political right of the time but, as a number of commentators have recently noticed, describing phenomena now more

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apparent on the left. When in the 1960s Columbia was taken over by student radicals, he tried to steer a middle course, which is to say he tried to be a good liberal. Privately, however, Brown says Hofstadter thought of writing a book about the 1960s called *The Age of Rubbish*. Hofstadter died in 1970 at the early age of fifty-four. By then he was viewed as an anachronism by many of his colleagues in the history guild. Nuechterlein writes: "It was, indeed, Hofstadter's rejection of sentimentality that made him, and other 50's intellectuals like him, outsiders in their own political community. If 50's liberalism prided itself on its sense of irony, theirs was an irony within an irony, too fragile by far to contend with the newly radicalized forces that were pushing liberalism leftward and for whom both irony and moderation constituted forms of betrayal. So it was that, politically speaking, Richard Hofstadter would die a disappointed man." James Nuechterlein is among the many who came to political awareness under the auspices of the liberalism espoused by Richard Hofstadter and who have in later decades reluctantly accepted the appellation "conservative"—or, as some prefer, "neoconservative." Recognizing that Hofstadter-like liberalism is beyond recall, some who cannot bring themselves to be associated with conservatism in any form are today trying to promote an approximation of that older liberalism under the name of progressivism. The effort is not likely to make much progress, mainly because anything that today is not conservatism has abandoned the respect for civility, culture, and tradition that marked that older liberalism. But of the making and remaking of political brands there is no end.

■ Michael Wyschogrod is without doubt one of the most interesting Jewish theologians of recent decades. There is an old argument that what Jewish thinkers do is not "theology," which, it is said, is a Christian term. But we do well to bypass that pedantic objection. Wyschogrod's work has occasioned frequent mention in these pages. And now *Modern Theology* has published a symposium, "Abraham's Promise: The Thought of Michael Wyschogrod." Wyschogrod's thought is in important ways sympathetic to that of Karl Barth, the most influential Protestant theologian of the century past. In his response to the symposium contributors, Wyschogrod writes, "When Barth said to me that Jews have only the promise but not the fulfillment, I replied that a promise from God is a sure thing and therefore, if we have the promise, we just about have the fulfillment." He doesn't say what Barth said in response. Of particular interest is Wyschogrod's response to Michael Walzer, a philosopher at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Princeton. Wyschogrod proposes a "command theory" of ethics that Christian thinkers might describe as Barthian:

> Michael Walzer's incisive critique reminds me that all my life I have been protesting against those who I perceive to be reducing Judaism to ethics, e.g., Hermann Cohen and Emmanuel Levinas. I have referred to ethics as the Judaism of the assimilated and have noted that neither Cohen nor Levinas has much to say about the *akeida*, the binding of Isaac. I have often expressed the view that reason cannot be the source of a persuasive ethics for a number of reasons, only one of which I will mention. No moral law is persuasive if it is not enforced. Even if we could derive moral maxims from reason alone, these maxims would float in the air impotently because they would lack a built-in cosmic mechanism of enforcement. It therefore follows, I think, that only an ethics rooted in divine command with a built-in mechanism of enforcement—a God who punishes and rewards—is ethically persuasive. In the momentous problem raised by Plato as to whether the pious or holy is beloved by the gods because it is holy, or holy because it is beloved of the gods (*Euthyphro* 10), I have always been attracted by the latter alternative: the good is not independent of God but constituted by his will. Michael disagrees. He described himself as a secular political philosopher whose values are derived from reason and not God. He informs us that he is not a theologian or the son of a theologian, which leads me to wonder whether he could nevertheless be the descendant of one. All Jews were at Sinai and all of them, we are told by the rabbis, reached the level of prophecy there, which makes Michael a descendant of prophets.
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> Basically, Michael accuses me of reading the bible selectively, focusing on the merciful and loving parts and ignoring the bloody parts. He suspects that I am more of a rational ethicist than I realize and that my aversion to shedding blood has its roots in secular ethics rather than biblical obedience. I do not agree. Reading Michael, one would think that the bible consists of nothing but bloody and immoral commands. There are bloody commands—whether they are immoral is another matter—but there are also many commands which dictate love and compassion and condemn the shedding of human blood. In my reading of the bible, love and compassion are the default position. In the absence of a specific divine command to the contrary, we are required to love our fellow human beings all of

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whom are created in the image of God, perhaps the most powerful statement in the bible, even if it only occurs once. Where there is a specific divine command, transmitted by prophecy to shed blood, God must be obeyed. No divine command can be immoral; it can only appear so to the finite human mind. God is the author of life and he can command its termination. God terminates human life all the time, even if such termination is called cancer or stroke. When God issues dreadful commands, we are seized by fear and trembling. Because the default position is one of peace, we are entitled to require a very high degree of certainty that the command we hear is truly from God. If it is a matter of capital punishment to be imposed for an evil deed, we are entitled to require evidence much higher than reasonable doubt, especially since the bible does not specify what kind of evidence of guilt is required. This is not an evasion of the command but a responsible loyalty to the default position which, in my view, is more deeply rooted in the bible than the difficult commands which are there but which are rather exceptional.

The ancient rabbis did what they could to prevent human bloodshed whenever possible, without challenging God's authority to command as he sees fit. In so doing, both they and I remain loyal to the complexity of a Torah that emanates from realms beyond human comprehension but which human beings struggle to understand and apply in the human world.

This understanding of divine command is pertinent to the questions addressed by Pope Benedict in his September 12 lecture at Regensburg. (See my essay "The Regensburg Moment" in the November issue.) Benedict was addressing what might be called the command theory of ethics in Islam and contrasting it with the Hellenic-Christian synthesis of faith and reason that insists upon the centrality of the *Logos* with its correspondence between natural reason and divine will. This is not to say that Benedict's critique of Islam applies in the same way to Wyschogrod's understanding of Judaism. There is, for instance, the question of the "default position" of love and compassion.

■ Here's a rather different take on what evangelicals mean by being born again. Alan Wolfe, a Boston College sociologist who heads up the Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life, says in an interview with the *Boston College Observer* that evangelical conservatism may have peaked, because the next generation of evangelicals will rebel against their parents' views. "Let's look at it this way," says Wolfe. "What does it mean to be 'born again'? It means you had a moment in which you broke from your family's religious tradition. So what if you're a child of someone who's born again—do you have a similar moment?" Leaving aside Mr. Wolfe's curious view of what it means to be born again, as a sociological explanation his idea does leave something to be desired in understanding a tradition of successive generations of born-again evangelicalism. As there have been other occasions to note, for a director of a center on religion and American public life, Mr. Wolfe is curiously incurious about American religion.

■ As we all know, "the wall of separation between church and state" is in the Constitution. Except that it isn't. Daniel Dreisbach, professor of law at American University in Washington, D.C., reflects on the damage that has been done by "constitutionalizing" the phrase found in Thomas Jefferson's 1802 letter to the Baptist Association of Danbury, Connecticut. He writes:

A wall is a bilateral barrier that inhibits the activities of both the civil government and religion—unlike the First Amendment, which imposes restrictions on civil government only. In short, a wall not only prevents the civil state from intruding on the religious domain but also prohibits religion from influencing the conduct of civil government. The various First Amendment guarantees, however, were entirely a check or restraint on civil government, specifically on Congress. The free press guarantee, for example, was not written to protect the civil state from the press, but to protect a free and independent press from control by the national government. Similarly, the religion provisions were added to the Constitution to protect religion and religious institutions from corrupting interference by the national government, not to protect the civil state from the influence of, or overreaching by, religion. As a bilateral barrier, however, the wall unavoidably restricts religion's ability to influence public life, thereby exceeding the limitations imposed by the First Amendment.

Herein lies the danger of this metaphor. The "high and impregnable" wall constructed by the modern Court has been used to inhibit religion's ability to inform the public ethic, to deprive religious citizens of the civil liberty to participate in politics armed with ideas informed by their faith, and to infringe the right of religious communities and institutions to extend their prophetic ministries into the public square. Today, the "wall of separation"

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> is the sacred icon of a strict separationist dogma intolerant of religious influences in the public arena. It has been used to silence religious voices in the public marketplace of ideas and to segregate faith communities behind a restrictive barrier.

Dreisbach cites the definitive work on the subject, *Separation of Church and State*, by Philip Hamburger of the University of Chicago. The "wall of separation" language was much invoked by anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic forces in the nineteenth century, especially by the then powerful Ku Klux Klan. Although it is often forgotten today, the KKK was as vehemently anti-Catholic as it was anti-black. Dreisbach writes: "Again, in the mid-20th century, the rhetoric of separation was revived and ultimately constitutionalized by anti-Catholic elites, such as Justice Hugo L. Black, and fellow travelers in the ACLU and Protestants and Other Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, who feared the influence and wealth of the Catholic Church and perceived parochial education as a threat to public schools and democratic values. The chief architect of the modern 'wall' was Justice Black, whose affinity for church-state separation and the metaphor was rooted in virulent anti-Catholicism. Hamburger has argued that Justice Black, a former Alabama Ku Klux Klansman, was the product of a remarkable 'confluence of Protestant, nativist, and progressive anti-Catholic forces. . . . Black's association with the Klan has been much discussed in connection with his liberal views on race, but, in fact, his membership suggests more about [his] ideals of Americanism,' especially his support for separation of church and state. 'Black had long before sworn, under the light of flaming crosses, to preserve "the sacred constitutional rights" of "free public schools" and "separation of church and state."' Although he later distanced himself from the Klan on matters of race, 'Black's distaste for Catholicism did not diminish.' Black's admixture of progressive, Klan, and strict separationist views is best understood in terms of anti-Catholicism and, more broadly, a deep hostility to assertions of ecclesiastical authority." The way forward is the way back to the original meaning of the first freedom of the First Amendment—the free exercise of religion. In this term, the U.S. Supreme Court will have several opportunities to address the confusion caused by elevating Jefferson's metaphor into constitutional law.

■ The editors at *Religion Watch* were going through past issues and noted that in 1987 Father Andrew Greeley was asked to look ahead twenty years to what religion would be like in 2007. Fr. Greeley said, "The power of the pope definitely will shrink. Today we are experiencing the last gasp of a dying order, and in 20 years it will be gone." Which helps explain why we try to keep out of the prediction business.

■ The Catholic bishops of Scotland have come out against the proposal to replace Britain's Trident missile system. Renato Cardinal Martino, head of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, welcomes their statement. He said, "Nuclear weapons represent a grave threat to the human family. . . . [T]he statement issued by the Bishops' Conference of Scotland constitutes a service and a reason to hope in a more peaceful world." Some will no doubt object to this line of thinking, but note that he did not explicitly say that, if the relatively sane governments of the world gave up their nuclear arms, the leaders of countries such as Iran and North Korea would recognize the error of their ways.

■ The growing number of distinguished Protestant theologians and pastors, especially Lutheran, entering into full communion with the Catholic Church has provoked Frank Senn, himself a distinguished scholar and pastor in ELCA Lutheranism, to pen "I'll Stay Here, Where I Stand." He is particularly disappointed that Phillip Max Johnson, the head of the Society of the Holy Trinity, a group of "evangelical catholic" Lutheran pastors, has become Catholic. Senn succeeded Johnson as the leader of the society and wants it understood that he's not going to follow his bad example. He takes aim at the conventional wisdom among evangelical catholics that Lutheranism was originally not intended as a separate church but as a reforming movement within the one Church of Christ. I admit that that is the understanding of Lutheranism that I, as a Lutheran, did more than my share to advance. Senn writes: "Of course Lutheranism was a reform movement in the 1520s. But then it produced a confession of faith in 1530 that was adopted by the churches in some territories. At that point *churches* became Lutheran. Within the Holy Roman Empire these churches attained equal ecclesiastical status with the papal church in the Peace of Augsburg in 1555. One by one the churches of other lands adopted the Lutheran Confession of Augsburg and reorganized themselves accordingly. This reform of the church of the city, territory, or land was initiated by decisions of city councils, at the instigation of princes and kings, and sometimes by a decision of the church itself—as when the Church of Sweden adopted the Augsburg Confession in 1593 *against* the Catholic confession of its king, Sigismund III Vasa. We contemporary Lutherans have not come out of a movement. We have come out of the

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churches that were the Catholic Church of their place." That is a nice touch, that Lutheranism was established "sometimes by a decision of the church itself." Senn concludes: "My concern to be faithful to my ordination vows does not depend on the faithfulness of my church to its confessions. I have the *ministerium* that is the Society of the Holy Trinity to support me in remaining faithful. And in my congregation, at least, I don't have to fight a cultural battle to raise the level of liturgical music, such as several former Lutheran pastors have experienced in Roman Catholic parishes. That's got to be some benefit of this decision!" The whack at Catholic music is fair enough. As for the larger argument, it is true that Lutheranism was politically established as "the church" in various principalities. What importance that has in the theological reflection on ecclesiology, however, is far from evident. In *Catholic Matters* and elsewhere, I have written about the problems inherent in trying to maintain "catholic enclaves" of parishes and associations within ecclesial communities that are set upon being permanently separated Protestant denominations. I have no doubt about the sincerity of Pastor Senn and others similarly situated. In many cases, family and other obligations quite rightly enter into their reflections about whether or not to become Catholic. But, as *Dominus Iesus*, the 2000 statement of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, makes clear, it really will not do to claim that what Lutherans—or Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists, et al.—mean by church is theologically symmetrical with what Catholics mean by the Church. As Cardinal Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict) pointed out to Protestant critics of *Dominus Iesus*, they should not complain when the Catholic Church agrees with them that they do not and should not claim to be the Church in the same way that the Catholic Church claims to be the Church. (In these discussions, the Orthodox Church is quite another matter.) For Pastor Senn and others, declining to become Catholic should not be justified by implausibly elevating the ecclesiological status of a reforming movement that transmogrified in some places into established churches but by addressing—and, if so convinced, attempting to refute—the ecclesiological claims of the Catholic Church.

■ The never-ending survey research on religion in America appears to have misplaced ten million people. That's the finding of a major study by sociologists at Baylor University. In 1990, a lot of attention was paid when surveys suggested that the unaffiliated who checked "none" or "no religion" when asked their affiliation had doubled from seven percent to 14 percent of the population. This was taken to indicate increased secularization. But the Baylor study, recognized as one of the most detailed ever done, found that a tenth of those who picked "no religion" also specified the place where they worship. The truly unaffiliated, the researchers say, is more like 10.8 percent than 14 percent, which is a difference of ten million people. There are all kinds of complexities in such research. Is someone religious if they go to church? If they believe in God? If they identify with a particular religious group? And what if they do one but not the others? Which gets more weight? Then there are those who say they are atheists but they pray regularly. Go figure.

■ In becoming a Catholic, John Henry Newman accented the discontinuities more than the continuities with Anglicanism. At least that is the impression David Hart gathers from a recent collection of Newman sermons, *Discourses Addressed to Mixed Congregations* (Notre Dame). Hart writes: "These sermons also offer a somewhat sobering reminder to those who might be too quick to assume Newman into the pantheon of apologists for 'mere Christianity.' It becomes evident from early on in the text that Newman, at this point in his thinking (and ever after, frankly), did not see his conversion simply as a deeper affirmation of what he had received from his Anglican formation—merely continuous with the faith of his nonage and early manhood—but to a very great degree a rejection of the very principles of Anglicanism (considered *in se*) and of Protestantism in general. The question he poses concerning his erstwhile confessional loyalties is not whether Anglicanism and Protestantism are deficient expressions of Christianity, but whether they are in the proper sense Christian at all. He is quite clear (and to drive the point home, he enunciates a much more uncompromising doctrine of hell than his Anglican contemporaries were generally wont to do) that to his mind the Catholic Church is the sole true Ark of Salvation, and that those outside her visible bounds are in a perilous state indeed." But, of course, that was long before Catholics discovered ecumenism.

■ Many years ago, Ronald Reagan spoke to a group of evangelicals in Texas and, holding up the Bible, declared that all the answers to our problems are in this book. Mark Noll, the eminent historian of American religion who has moved from Wheaton to Notre Dame, tilts toward the ambivalent side on that question. Discussing the Civil War in the *Christian Century*, he writes: "With debate over the Bible and slavery at such a pass, and especially with the success of the proslavery biblical argument manifestly (if also uncomfortably) convincing to most southerners and many in the North, difficulties abounded. The coun-

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try had a problem because its most trusted religious authority, the Bible, was sounding an uncertain note. The evangelical Protestant churches had a problem because the mere fact of trusting implicitly in the Bible was not solving disagreements about what the Bible taught concerning slavery. The country and the churches were both in trouble because the remedy that finally solved the question of how to interpret the Bible was recourse to arms. The supreme crisis over the Bible was that there existed no apparent biblical resolution to the crisis. It was left to those consummate theologians, the reverend doctors Ulysses S. Grant and William Tecumseh Sherman, to decide what in fact the Bible actually meant." Of course, that doesn't mean that Reagan was wrong. All the answers may very well be in the Bible, if we could only agree on its interpretation. Noll's very serious point, which he has developed in detail elsewhere, is that the Civil War played a large part in shaking the confidence of a Protestant and Bible-believing nation in the capacity of religion to resolve disputes of great public moment. Catholics never believed that the Bible, unmediated by interpretative authority, could play that role. Which does not mean that there could not have been a Civil War if this had been a predominantly Catholic country. It does mean that all cultures, philosophies, and belief systems, religious or not, are subject to being taken captive by disordered passions that overwhelm a necessary humility in the face of historical dynamics that we neither understand nor control.

■ Almost everybody agrees that David Bentley Hart's *The Beauty of the Infinite* is one of the most impressive works of theology to appear in some years. (See FIRST THINGS, March 2004.) *Theology Today*, the publication of Princeton Theological Seminary, finally has gotten around to giving it a review, albeit a short one. Ellen Charry complains that it is "male to its toes" (not the usual anatomical mark of maleness) and concludes with this: "Only at the very end of the book does Hart acknowledge the rhetoric of violence at the heart of Christian evangelism, and then only to skirt the problem. Not only is global Christianization at the heart of Christian rhetoric, but it has been carried out by force on occasion. Was baptism not made mandatory by Emperor Justinian in the sixth century to unify the empire? And what of forced conversion of Jews in the Middle Ages? The political implication of universalizing Christian rhetoric has vanished beneath an unnuanced normative dream of the beauty of the Christian narrative." Well, no, Justin didn't quite do that, and Jews were sometimes forced to listen to Christian apologetics but not to convert. But if we promise to ignore Mr. Hart's maleness and to never convert people by force, can we please get back to *The Beauty of the Infinite*?

■ Robert Jenson, as has been noted frequently in these pages, is one of the more interesting theological minds at work today. Jens, as he is known, is still a Lutheran. (Why won't my delete key delete that *still*?) He was recently interviewed by the *Christian Century* and was asked, "What do you make of the recent conversions to the Roman Catholic Church of some prominent Protestant theologians, such as Reinhard Hütter, Bruce Marshall, Rusty Reno and Gerald Schlabach—theologians you yourself have been in conversation with?" Jenson: "One could add to the list. Those of them I know well describe their reasons differently. But I think one thing is common to all or most of them: they intend to inhabit the one, historically real church confessed by the creeds, and could no longer recognize this in their Protestant denominations. And indeed, if the church of the creeds does not, as the Second Vatican Council put it, 'subsist in' the Roman Catholic Church, it is hard to think where it could. Blanche Jenson [his wife] long ago convinced me that the Western church could be renewed in faithfulness only by a fruit-basket upset of alignments, and that God must surely have something like that in mind. Perhaps this movement of theologians is part of such an upset. I lament the loss to the Protestant denominations, but I rejoice in the access of talent and energy to the church which will in future bear most of Christianity's burden. For if present trends continue, the ecumene of the century now beginning will comprise Orthodoxy, Pentecostalist groups and predominantly the Roman Catholic Church; the Protestant denominations and territorial churches will have sunk into insignificance—but again, present trends of course do not always continue." Maybe that explains why I can't delete that *still*.

■ Modesty is a virtue not usually associated with artists. Maybe just to get attention, maybe because that is who they are, they more commonly present themselves as egomaniacs strutting their stuff. But Eric Gibson, writing in a new journal, *in character*, tells a different story. He notes that in the 1950s Picasso gave a number of his paintings to the Musee National d'Art Moderne (now part of the Pompidou Center) and asked that they be placed alongside some of the Louvre's masterpieces. And so they were. "Several were set up near *St. Bonaventure on His Bier*, one of the Spanish golden-century works that meant most to Don Pablo. Nearby were the Velasquezes, the Murillos, the Goyas. He looked them all over silently, while those present tried to divine the reaction in his intense-

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ly impressive eyes. Finally, in a quiet, as if pacified voice, he said, 'See, they're the same thing.' And repeated, 'The very same thing.'" Gibson adds, "For Picasso, the past was the only altar before which he would bow in humility." Refusing to hold himself accountable to anything other than art itself, and believing that he was as good as the best, may strike some readers as something other than humility. More convincing is an observation by James Hall in *Michelangelo and the Reinvention of the Human Body*, which Gibson cites. On the much and justly admired *Pieta*, surely one of the greatest works of art of all time, Michelangelo chiseled on the band that runs diagonally across Mary's robed body, "Michael Angelus Bonarotus Florent Facieba." The inscription is grammatically incorrect, but intentionally so. Hall writes: "The incomplete 'facieba[t]' was a revival of an ancient method of signing artworks. By saying that the artist 'was making' rather than 'made' the artwork, it suggested he had stopped before the work was finished. This demonstrated the humility of the artist ('my work is imperfect and so it cannot be regarded as finished') as well as the enormity of the task."

■ "The Future of Pro-Life Progressivism." That was the subject of a symposium in Minneapolis, and the presentations are gathered in the *University of St. Thomas Law Journal*. The keynote address was given by Jim Wallis of *Sojourners*, author of *God's Politics* and adviser to the Democrat party on how to win back those "values voters." But most of the presentations were by Catholics devoted to the "seamless garment" or "consistent life ethic" associated with the late Joseph Cardinal Bernardin of Chicago. Among the more thoughtful participants was Mark Sargent, dean of the Villanova University School of Law. He writes: "Democrats look back wistfully upon that moment when they think about the Catholic vote. But that moment is really gone, for one reason that has little to do with religion and another that has everything to do with it. The first reason was the Republican Party's enormous success in forging an iron link between race and taxes—i.e., paying high taxes came to mean spending money on undeserving and threatening black people—that began with Richard Nixon and culminated in the reigns of Ronald Reagan and the first President Bush, and tore white ethnic Catholics, now largely middle class or at least lower-middle class, away from the Democratic Party and its tax-and-spend, race-coddling liberals." The second reason, he says, has everything to do with religion, sex, and the family, and, above all, with abortion. "The Republican Party seized upon and exploited this development, increasingly presenting itself as the only possible home for religious people, and the Democrats played into their hands, at least in presidential politics, by adopting an extreme position on choice that is at least as non-negotiable as the strongest Catholic position against abortion." Almost nobody will argue with that, but does Prof. Sargent really want to stand by his first reason? It is a terrible thing to suggest about Catholics, that once they were non-poor they no longer cared about the poor. And, while he doesn't use the term, resentment of undeserving and threatening black people does sound like liberal-talk for racism. Is he opposed to the widely acclaimed welfare reform promoted during the "reigns" of Reagan and the first Bush and signed into law by President Clinton? A deeper problem in this and other presentations is an assumed tension or conflict between pro-life concern and what is repeatedly called "social justice." There are few things, if anything, so clearly required by social justice than that a society not kill its babies. If we don't get that right, we're not likely to get much of anything else right. Yet the symposium proceeds on the implicit assumption that "Pro-Life Progressivism" will strike most people as something of an oxymoron. And what are the "progressive" issues (several writers obviously long for the days when they could come right out and say "liberal") that create this tension with a pro-life commitment? Most frequently mentioned are opposition to capital punishment, U.S. policy in the Middle East, and almost everything associated with George W. Bush. Then there is the grab bag called "concern for the poor." It is not at all clear what is in the bag. Some would apparently like to revive Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty. That is by now a traditionalist sentiment, although dearly held by many liberals. For the domestic poor, and especially for the urban underclass, one might argue that the greatest advance of justice would be parental choice in education. For some reason, that does not qualify as concern for the poor. Writers favor massively expanded government spending on social problems, which, as some conservatives would observe, should make them great fans of the current president. As for the poor of the world, John Paul II's encyclical *Centesimus Annus* is rich in proposals for helping the poor enter into the circle of productivity of exchange. But *Centesimus Annus* rates barely a mention, and then only to complain about the way it has been hijacked by conservatives. The progressivism in this symposium's "Pro-Life Progressivism" seems to be chiefly the conviction of the participants that they are better people, they *care* more about other people, and especially about the poor and disadvantaged, than do the pro-lifers with whom they are so embarrassingly associated. The evidence of their moral superiority is that those other pro-lifers are con-

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servatives and even Republicans. The thought that those who disagree with them on specific policies might be equally caring and equally devoted to Catholic social doctrine, and perhaps even more caring in the living of their daily lives, did not impinge unduly on a symposium that too often reads like an unseemly exercise in moral smugness joined to political frustration.

■ Miles Douglas writes in the *The Spectator* (UK) that he invited a gay friend to a dinner party with his non-gay neighbors, and his friend was forced to admit that it was a much better evening than those usually spent with his all-gay friends. Douglas continues:

> Today, the most striking feature of gay politics is its lack of nuance. Feminists increasingly acknowledge the complexity of women's (and men's) lives, the anti-racist movement passionately debates multiculturalism, but the gay movement remains remarkably unreconstructed. Our problems, it maintains, do not arise from within ourselves, or from the choices we make, but from oppression by heterosexual society and anything perceived as traditional values.
>
> That simplistic narrative holds sway across the spectrum of gay organizations, from the most radical to the ostensibly conservative. It at once denies us our individuality and absolves us of personal responsibility.
>
> We can see the results of this approach in the gay press. Pick up a magazine like *Gay Times*, for instance, and you will not find a spectrum of social attitudes. Instead, politically correct victim culture is allied with rampant consumerism. Freedom is identified with a shopping list, whether of possessions or political demands. Throughout the gay media, consumerism is extended to the human person, who is reduced to a disposable item. Just as the ideology of victimhood is pervasive, so is the low-grade pornography, criticism of which is taboo. Any notion of self-restraint is condemned as oppressive.
>
> Any spiritual aspiration, any hope for anything beyond material and sexual satisfaction, is derided as irrelevant. The vicissitudes of gay life, notably the culture of promiscuity, are alternately ascribed to the legacy of oppression (and therefore not our fault) and celebrated as a form of "liberation." Gay activism, which angrily expects our gratitude, perpetuates the idea that heterosexuals, especially heterosexual men, represent a hostile force. When I reveal that many of my closest friends are straight men, this is viewed as unusual, even slightly suspicious, as if to integrate were somehow to be letting the side down. This is despite the fact that homosexual law reforms have been enacted by parliaments consisting largely of heterosexual men.
>
> The result of all this is a male homosexual culture that is simultaneously turned in on itself and unable to address its own shortcomings. It confuses morality and conscience with moralistic repression. Through this confusion, we become afraid to question the casual acceptance of promiscuity and pornography, and the shallow materialistic values that underpin it, lest we be accused of hypocritical puritanism. When we criticize the gay lifestyle, we are accused by activists of self-oppression, but the true oppression comes from within that lifestyle rather than from hostile external forces. In an age of equal rights, we have become our own victims, devoured by the movement we created.
>
> I do not, in any sense, wish to suggest that I possess superior insight. Indeed I have committed all the lapses of judgment and taste that I have touched upon above, because I, like my dinner-party friend, have had to "live in the gay world." That world is failing to recognize that true liberation starts with the individual. Equality is worth little, ultimately, without compassion, responsibility and conscience. Now that the political battles are won, we should start to put our own house in order. This is much harder than repeating scripted slogans about rights, but at least it will mean better dinner parties.

One has a certain ambivalence when reading more sensible writers on the homosexual scene, such as Miles Douglas. Of course the criticism of promiscuity, pornography, and the victim mentality is to be welcomed. Yet there is no way of lifting the dark clouds over a way of life that turns on the identification of the self with the satisfaction of morally disordered desire, a way of life marked by a tragically high incidence of loneliness, alcoholism, drugs, disease, and early death. There is a more widespread tolerance, but it is not true that the battle for the acceptance of homosexuality has been won. One admires parents who continue to love their gay children, but in the faces of those who carry signs declaring that they are proud of their gay sons one detects the determination to hide the sadness of wishing it were not so.

■ On Thursday, September 7, in Paderborn, Germany, the police raided the home of Katharina Plett and put her under arrest. Before being taken to Gelsenkirchen prison, she was permitted to contact her husband who had fled the country the day before with their twelve children. Their crime was that they were homeschooling their children, which is legally forbidden in Germany. It is not only Germany. On September 27, the

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European Court of Human Rights issued a ruling: "Parents may not refuse the right to education of a child on the basis of their convictions." The court added that education "by its very nature calls for regulation by the state." In some other European countries, homeschooling is severely restricted. In ratings of academic performance in Europe, Germany's state education is near the bottom of the list. Many parents also protest its graphic sex education and promotion of ideologies contrary to Christian moral teaching. Tough. In another case, a German court ruled that parents who "continually or obstinately prevent their children from fulfilling the compulsory school attendance" be fined or sent to prison for up to six months. In Germany and elsewhere, however, parents have discovered the Internet and are linking up with homeschooling networks, especially those in the United States, where it is estimated that two million children are being homeschooled. In Europe, there is just the beginning of agitations to challenge statist tyranny in education. In view of the catastrophic demographics of Europe, one might think that governments would be more solicitous of people who are having children at all. On the other hand, a shrinking market of children intensifies the determination of state educators to maintain their monopoly.

■ *The Harvard Crimson* reports that nearby Boston College, a Jesuit institution, has issued a directive that, when inviting speakers on subjects such as abortion, college groups should make sure that "a Catholic perspective" is included in the event. The Crimson notes that "Junior Cecilia Fierro, a member of the Women's Health Initiative, a controversial pro-choice group not sponsored by the university, said that the policy 'sets us further behind in a goal for university recognition.'" One should hope so.

■ It is no secret that Pope John Paul II had grave misgivings about the invasion of Iraq by the U.S.-led coalition in 2003. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger made statements at the time that appeared to suggest it was an unjust war. When, however, Italian troops were killed in Iraq, Camillo Cardinal Ruini, head of the Italian bishops conference, left no doubt that he thought they had died in a just and necessary effort. Since 2003, the Holy See has been supportive of the coalition effort to achieve a modicum of peace and justice in Iraq. On October 22, marking the end of Ramadan, Pope Benedict at the midday Angelus in St. Peter's Square called on Iraq's politicians and the international community to have the "courage" to follow through on the country's reconstruction. He asked for prayers "that God may grant the faith and courage necessary to religious and political leaders, local and worldwide, to support those people on the path of reconstruction of the homeland, in the search for a shared balance, in mutual respect." It would be wrong to try to recruit the pope to any side in our domestic disputes about U.S. policy in Iraq. Obviously, he is not endorsing the Bush administration. Just as obviously, he is saying that the international community—and there is not much of an international community without the United States—has a long-term responsibility to help the Iraqis achieve a better country.

■ If anybody has a keen nose for anti-Catholicism, it is the Catholic League for Civil and Religious Rights. A while back, I noted the outlandish opinion of Judge Robert Pratt of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Iowa, who found that Prison Fellowship Ministries (PFM) is, among other very bad things, anti-Catholic (August/September 2006). He ruled that an Iowa state contract with PFM be canceled and that PFM return all funds received. The Catholic League has filed a forceful brief in support of PFM's appeal of the judgment. The Catholic League notes that PFM founder, Charles Colson, is a leader of "Evangelicals and Catholics Together," and that PFM has prominent Catholics in leadership positions. Then there is this: "We agree with the district court, certainly, that Evangelical Christianity is one among many Christian expressions, which contrast in many nontrivial ways with each other. But these various differences do not necessarily make each tradition the antithesis of the other. Presbyterians are not *ipso facto* 'anti-Methodists,' Calvinists are not by definition 'anti-Lutherans' and Evangelicals—particularly Prison Fellowship—are most certainly not anti-Catholic. More importantly, it is not for district courts to discern that they are." The undisputed fact is that PFM has an outstanding record of changing lives, of preparing prisoners to live responsibly upon release, and of dramatically reducing recidivism. Does it happen that individual prisoners in PFM programs sometimes promote anti-Catholic views? Of course. There is freedom of speech also in prisons. But such views are clearly contrary to PFM policy. The main point, however, is that Judge Pratt wandered far beyond his personal competence and his judicial authority in setting himself up as an adjudicator between differing theological positions.

■ I expect this is a form letter that Fr. Robert Wild, S.J., president of Marquette University in Milwaukee, sends to people who complain about the presence of Daniel Maguire on the theology faculty. One recipient of the letter tells me that it shows that Fr. Wild is a "weasel." Well, I'm not so sure. True, there is the usual

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stuff about academic freedom and the legalities surrounding tenure, and to say that Maguire's "positions regarding certain matters are not totally consonant with formal church teaching" is a little like saying that Osama bin Laden has some problems with Christianity. But then Fr. Wild goes on to write, "I also find it useful to recall that even Jesus did not have a perfect group of disciples." As with the apostles, the whole faculty should not be condemned "for the misdeeds of one of them." Comparing Prof. Maguire to Judas Iscariot strikes me as taking a rather definite position. Prof. Maguire is not invited to exit the scene in the manner of Judas Iscariot, but Fr. Wild offers the assurance that he teaches no required courses and, except for those "who elect to enroll in his advanced classes," students are shielded from his influence. The one-line summary of Fr. Wild's letter is, "We're stuck with this guy." I don't know if Marquette has tried the Boston College ploy used in the case of Mary Daly, the wild-eyed feminist who promotes a utopian world without men. Rather than fight her lawsuit over tenure, they gave her a bundle to stay far away from campus. It might be worth it to protect the credibility of a university that, in the words of Fr. Wild, "unreservedly and enthusiastically avows itself as Catholic." Of course, Prof. Maguire might resist the idea that he can be bought off. After all these years of working for pro-abortion and population-control organizations while trading on the claim that he is a Catholic theologian at a Catholic university, he has had more than the usual number of occasions to wrestle with the ethics of personal and intellectual integrity.

■ *Having Her Say* is a splendid collection of essays by women that have appeared in the *Human Life Review* over the years. Included are: Clare Boothe Luce, Faith Abbott McFadden, Frederica Matthewes-Green, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Ellen Wilson Fielding, Rita Marker, Kathryn Jean Lopez, and Mary Ann Glendon. Not so frequently as was the case only a few years ago, but still all too frequently, the "woman's viewpoint" is assumed to be pro-choice. The fact that women are more pro-life than men, and married women *much* more pro-life than men, and many times more pro-life than single men, is only slowly taking root in these discussions. Seldom are the reasons behind that fact as persuasively set forth as in *Having Her Say*. (Copies may be purchased for $10.95 from The Human Life Foundation, 215 Lexington Ave., 4th Floor, New York, NY 10016. Make checks payable to The Human Life Foundation.)

■ Look at those thousands of people passing by on Fifth Avenue. What are they thinking about? A new nationwide survey by Beliefnet suggests that many of them may be praying, sort of. Although 6 to 8 percent of Americans usually say they do not believe in God, 97.5 percent say they talk to God, and 77.6 percent say they do so every day. And 72.8 percent say they talk to God "through prayer" and 80.6 percent say "through my internal thoughts" (13.5 percent write letters to God). Not only that, 57.9 percent say they have argued with God, and 49.3 percent say God argues back. "Does God talk to you?" Yes, with words, say 35.8 percent, and yes, without words, say 56.1 percent. God speaks and they hear a voice (23.8), God speaks through answering prayer (55.4), through dreams (43.5), through Scripture or worship (43.3), through other people (61.5), and, at the top, through an internal voice or conscience (75.7). Where do people find God "most accessible"? In daily life (42.3), in nature (9.6), in meditation (15), and, at the bottom, in church or other house of worship (2.5). What should we make of all this? First, there are no surprises, these findings being more or less in line with other studies over the years. Second, survey research is a very rough instrument for discerning what is going on between people and the transcendent. Third, most Americans think of themselves as spiritual lone rangers. Fourth, American egalitarianism is robust (80.2 percent say everyone is equal in their access to God, with 4.2 percent saying that children may have an edge). Fifth, Americans think that, all in all, they're on pretty good terms with God. On that last point, I regularly see references to the finding in other surveys that the vast majority of Americans say they believe in hell but only about 4 percent think they might end up there. This is taken to be evidence of contradiction or incoherence. In fact, however, almost 90 percent of Americans claim to be Christian of one sort of another and have been taught that, if they believe in Jesus as their Savior, they will go to heaven. Their confidence in their final destination may reflect spiritual insouciance (otherwise known as the sin of presumption), but there is not necessarily contradiction or incoherence in the finding.

■ Hurrying to catch up with an early phase of the radical feminism of the 1970s, the Archbishop's Council, a kind of cabinet of the Church of England, has issued guidelines cautioning against the use of "Lord," "He," and "Father" when referring to God. Such usage, we are informed, can encourage men to be violent toward women. The guidelines carry the endorsement of Dr. Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury. Particularly piquant is the quoting of the aforementioned theologian Mary Daly: "If God is male, then the male is God." Ah yes, Mary Daly. You may remember her. Now seventy-eight years old, she taught for thirty-

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three years at Boston College. She is a champion of the "biophilic life," a position that most who still call themselves feminists reject as misandrist and leading to reverse discrimination and the perpetuation of sexism. Daly has advocated research about parthenogenesis, which might make it possible to create and develop an embryo without male seed, thus creating an ideal male-free world. In her book *Pure Lust: Elemental Feminist Philosophy,* she advocates "nothing less than the process of a woman creating her Self." In short, Mary Daly is what psychiatrists call an interesting case. Things came to a head at Boston College when the administration pointed out that her policy of not admitting male students to her class violated her contract. She sued and there was a financial settlement that enables her to spend her time talking to audiences, wherever she can find them, interested in strolling down the memory lane of madnesses past. Who knew she would find such a ready audience in the high councils of the Church of England? All right, so you would have told her to go there first, but you probably have a problem with Anglicans, which is not nice. In any event, we are put on notice against the dangers of speaking about the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ who orders our unruly passions (male and female) by the love that counts every sparrow that falls, protects the little children, provides our daily bread, and sent his Son to bear our sorrows and work our salvation. (Who knows how many men will beat their wives tonight under the pernicious influence of that last sentence?)

■ Poor Emmanuel Milingo. He was archbishop of Lusaka, Zambia, and conducted a very popular, if controversial, ministry of exorcism. Then, in 2001, he went off the rails and married a Korean acupuncturist in a mass ceremony presided over by the Rev. Sun Myung Moon. The Vatican took him in charge, he repudiated his marriage, and he lived for a time a relatively quiet and carefully watched life in Rome. This past summer, he skipped town, and showed up in Washington, D.C., where he attempted to ordain four bishops at the temple founded by the Rev. George Augustus Stallings Jr. of the breakaway African-American Catholic Church. Rome notified him that, by his schismatic act, he had incurred automatic excommunication. Milingo told the *Washington Post*, "We do not accept this excommunication and lovingly return it to His Holiness, our beloved Pope Benedict XVI." As someone on Amy Welborn's blog remarked, "It reminds me of the time I returned the 'D' I got in physics." Except this time it is an "F." Milingo says he is launching a new organization to campaign for married priests. Say a prayer for the man.

■ I recently bumped into Bernard Lewis, now age ninety-one, Princeton's distinguished scholar of Islam. He was as lucid and persuasive as ever, and later that day held in thrall a large crowd at the Union League Club as, without notes, he offered a survey, historical and contemporary, of relations between Islam and the West, which most Muslims still view as the Christian West. I note he gave a similar talk at Hillsdale College in Michigan, and I crib his conclusion from the college's publication *Imprimis.*

> Let's spend a moment or two defining what we mean by freedom and democracy. There is a view sometimes expressed that "democracy" means the system of government evolved by the English-speaking peoples. Any departure from that is either a crime to be punished or a disease to be cured. I beg to differ from that point of view. Different societies develop different ways of conducting their affairs, and they do not need to resemble ours. And let us remember, after all, that American democracy after the War of Independence was compatible with slavery for three-quarters of a century and with the disenfranchisement of women for longer than that. Democracy is not born like the Phoenix. It comes in stages, and the stages and processes of development will differ from country to country, from society to society. The French cherish the curious illusion that they invented democracy, but since the great revolution of 1789, they have had two monarchies, two empires, two dictatorships, and at the last count, five republics. And I'm not sure that they've got it right yet.
>
> There are, as I've tried to point out, elements in Islamic society which could well be conducive to democracy. And there are encouraging signs at the present moment—what happened in Iraq, for example, with millions of Iraqis willing to stand in line to vote, knowing that they were risking their lives, is a quite extraordinary achievement. It shows great courage, great resolution. Don't be misled by what you read in the media about Iraq. The situation is certainly not good, but there are redeeming features in it. The battle isn't over. It's still very difficult. There are still many major problems to overcome. There is a bitter anti-Western feeling which derives partly and increasingly from our support for what they see as tyrannies ruling over them. It's interesting that pro-American feeling is strongest in countries with anti-American governments. I've been told repeatedly by Iranians that there is no country in the world where pro-American feeling is stronger, deeper and more widespread than Iran. I've heard this from so many different Iranians—including

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some still living in Iran—that I believe it. When the American planes were flying over Afghanistan, the story was that many Iranians put signs on their roofs in English reading, "This way, please."

So there is a good deal of pro-Western and even specifically pro-American feeling. But the anti-American feeling is strongest in those countries that are ruled by what we are pleased to call "friendly governments." And it is those, of course, that are the most tyrannical and the most resented by their own people. The outlook at the moment is, I would say, very mixed. I think that the cause of developing free institutions—along their lines, not ours—is possible. One can see signs of its beginning in some countries. At the same time, the forces working against it are very powerful and well entrenched. And one of the greatest dangers is that on their side, they are firm and convinced and resolute. Whereas on *our* side, we are weak and undecided and irresolute. And in such a combat, it is not difficult to see which side will prevail. The effort is difficult and the outcome uncertain, but I think the effort must be made. Either we bring them freedom, or they destroy us.

I am not at all sure that we can "bring them freedom," but our efforts can enhance the prospects for these people achieving an approximate freedom and justice in clear contrast to their present tyrannies. Lewis said, "Osama bin Laden is very articulate, very lucid, and I think on the whole very honest in the way he explains things." Bin Laden has famously said that, when people see a weak horse and a strong horse, they will go with the strong horse. He and his followers are convinced that America and the nations cooperating with America are the weak horse. They see, Lewis said at Hillsdale, a divided and weak America on the edge of capitulation because "they have no experience, and therefore no understanding, of the free debate of an open society. What we see as free debate, they see as weakness, fear, and division. Thus they prepare for the final victory, the final triumph and the final Jihad." In his discussion at the Union League Club, Lewis was even more somber. Maybe Osama bin Laden and his Jihadist allies are right, maybe we do not have the resolve to resist their determined assault, maybe we will think the cost too high and, with weariness reinforced by wishful thinking, we will acquiesce in their declared purposes. Lewis, who was a thoughtful young scholar in the years immediately leading up to World War II, said that never in his lifetime has he been so anxious about the survival of the West. Bernard Lewis is no alarmist. I take him very seriously and join him in hoping that his fears are disproved.

■ Last year the Christmas wars reached a fine pitch in, of all places, Manhasset, Long Island. Manhasset is an affluent and largely Catholic suburb of New York City, and Fr. Nick Zientarski of a local parish was asked to bless the Christmas tree in the town square. Not surprisingly, in his brief blessing he mentioned You Know Who. Jon Kaiman, town supervisor, was standing behind him and audibly muttering during the blessing that this is all "nonsense," after which he urged the crowd to ignore Fr. Nick's words and said the thing was a "holiday tree" and not a Christmas tree. The crowd was outraged by Kaiman's words, and the tabloids went wild, blazoning headlines such as "The Fight Before Christmas." Kaiman apologized, sort of, and Fr. Nick forgave him, but the wounds to civic amity are deep. It did not help that Mr. Kaiman is Jewish. One of those who were understandably mad in Manhasset sent me a public notice from the neighboring suburb of Great Neck. Great Neck is affluent and predominantly Jewish. The Village of Great Neck declares in big letters: "Christmas tree lighting festivities in Great Neck Plaza." The brouhaha also embroiled Huntington, yet another affluent Long Island suburb. In the public square of Huntington, there is a crèche sponsored by the Knights of Columbus and a Menorah sponsored by Chabad Lubavitch. A lawyer who is not incidentally Jewish is suing, claiming that he is personally offended and both displays violate the separation of church and state. And so it goes, on and on. On the one side are those who favor religio-cultural displays in public and, on the other, those who say they should be prohibited. The latter propose that the disagreement can be resolved by prohibiting them. For some reason, that does not strike those on the other side as a fair resolution. They, religious extremists that they are, propose civility and a decent respect for differences. They have even come up with a fancy formulation to disguise their fanaticism. They speak of ours being "a pluralistic society." What won't the theocrats think of next?

■ Peter Kreeft, who teaches philosophy at Boston College, a school "in the Jesuit tradition," told me an interesting story the other day. In the late sixties, BC took the crucifixes off classroom walls lest the school be perceived as "sectarian" and therefore be deprived of government funding. The Jesuits are a highly principled bunch, but the funding at stake was sizeable. One day, a Muslim student in Kreeft's class asked why the crucifixes had been removed. He was told that the school has a pluralistic student body and did not want to offend non-Catholics or non-Christians. At which the Muslim student declared himself deeply offended by the implication that he was a bigot. He explained

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that, if a Christian attended a Muslim university and declared himself offended by the Qur'anic inscriptions on the walls, he would surely view that Christian as a bigot. He said, in addition, that Muslims would not be so spineless in submitting to a government mandate that they erase the signs of their allegiance. It is a nice point, and Prof. Kreeft said the Christian, mainly Catholic, students in the class admitted they had not thought of it in quite that way. It is frequently the case that bigots are most vocal in talking about bigotry. Of course, BC is not precisely the public square. It is a Catholic school. Or at least a school "in the Jesuit tradition."

■ The ACLU continues, with considerable success, its campaign to eliminate any reference to Christmas from the public square. And now a little counter-campaign is stirring, which could turn into a very big campaign. It is suggested that millions of Americans send a Christmas card to the ACLU. Not with anything rude or crude, of course, which would not be nice, and Christians are supposed to be nice. But something with very specific reference to Christmas, as distinct from the organizations preferred usages such as "Happy Holidays," "Holiday Tree," and "Winter Festival." Since they don't know which of the millions of envelopes might contain contributions, they'll have to open each one. You might object that it is not nice to be a nuisance. But think: It will give the folks there multiple occasions to think about the meaning of Christmas. And of course you really do wish them a merry Christmas. The address of national ACLU headquarters is 125 Broad Street, 18th Floor, New York, NY 10004.

■ Reverberations from "the Regensburg moment" continue. On October 15, the Egypt State Information Service issued an "Open Letter to His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI" signed by thirty-eight (as of this writing) Muslim religious leaders and scholars of acknowledged stature. Speaking of Christianity and Islam, the letter says: "Together they make up more than 55 percent of the world's population, making the relationship between these two religious communities the most important factor in contributing to meaningful peace around the world. As the leader of over a billion Catholics and moral example for many others around the globe, yours is arguably the single most influential voice in continuing to move this relationship forward in the direction of mutual understanding." The letter is signed by, *inter alia*, the Grand Muftis of Istanbul, Egypt, Herzegovina, Russia, Syria, Croatia, Kosovo, Bosnia, and Uzbekistan, along with scholars at leading Muslim universities and other institutions.

■ The letter is respectful in tone and is offered "in the spirit of open exchange." The focus is, understandably, on that part of the Regensburg lecture dealing explicitly with Islam. The signers say Benedict is wrong in saying that the Qur'anic rule of "no compulsion in religion" applies only to situations in which Islam is weak. They criticize the pope for relying on non-Muslim "experts" who cannot speak for Islam. The claim that God is "absolutely transcendent" and unrelated to human reason is, they say, a "simplification which can be misleading." "To conclude that Muslims believe in a capricious God who might or might not command us to evil is to forget that God says in the Quran, 'Lo! God enjoins justice and kindness, and giving to kinsfolk, and forbids lewdness and abomination and wickedness.' . . . Muslims have come to terms with the power and limits of human intelligence in their own way, acknowledging a hierarchy of knowledge of which reason is a crucial part. . . . Muslims through the ages have maintained a consonance between the truths of the Quranic revelation and the demands of human intelligence, without sacrificing one for the other." This is partly, but only partly, responsive to Benedict's argument that to act against reason is to act against the nature of God, who has revealed himself as the *Logos*. The pope's claim, which he says is integral to Christianity, is that there is a synthesis between faith and reason in which reason participates in the eternal law of God, so that, in rightly ordered reason, there cannot be, even conceptually, a question of sacrificing one for the sake of the other.

■ With respect to current conflicts, the signers make the usual point that "Jihad means struggle, and specifically struggle in the way of God." They add, "This struggle may take many forms including the use of force. Though a jihad may be sacred in the sense of being directed towards a sacred ideal, it is not necessarily a 'war.'" They ask, "When God drowned Pharaoh, was He going against His own Nature?" "Religious belief alone does not make anyone the object of attack. The original Muslim community was fighting against pagans who had expelled them from their homes, persecuted, tortured, and murdered them. Thereafter, the Islamic conquests were political in nature." "Muslims can and should live peacefully with their neighbors. . . . However, this does not exclude legitimate self-defense and maintenance of sovereignty." Apart from the dubious historical claims, one cannot help but note that this begs a number of questions. What, in Islam, is the relationship between the religious and the political? Are they separable or even distinguishable? Al-Qaeda and others contend that their declaration of war against what

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they view as the Christian West is precisely legitimate self-defense and the maintenance (or restoration) of sovereignty in areas once under Muslim rule. Speaking of the violent response to Regensburg and, more specifically, the killing of a nun in Somalia, the signers say that these "and any other similar acts of wanton individual violence is completely un-Islamic, and we totally condemn such acts." Touching, at least obliquely, on organized terrorism, they say: "If some have disregarded a long and well-established tradition in favor of utopian dreams where the end justifies the means, they have done so of their own accord and without the sanction of God, His prophet, or the learned tradition." The signers say they agree with Benedict's statement at Cologne in 2005 when he said, "Interreligious and inter-cultural dialogue between Christians and Muslims cannot be reduced to an optional extra. It is, in fact, a vital necessity, on which in large measure our future depends." They then add, "Whilst we fully concur with you, it seems to us that a great part of the object of interreligious dialogue is to strive to listen to and consider the actual voices of those we are dialoguing with, and not merely those of our own persuasion." Everybody should be able to agree with that.

■ The open letter to the pope is to be welcomed. It is serious, respectful, and attempts to respond to the argument made at Regensburg. The reference to the Jihadism of religiously inspired terrorism may seem tepid, but it is not nothing for such a distinguished group of Islamic leaders to say that the "utopian dreams" of the Jihadist aggression are "without the sanction of God, His prophet, or the learned tradition"—if, indeed, the signers are referring to al-Qaeda and related networks. The insistence that there should be no compulsion in religion is important, although it is noteworthy that there is no mention of putatively Islamic regimes that enforce sharia law against conversions from Islam and against any public expression of non-Islamic religion. Nor is there any reference to the treatment of "people of the book"—meaning Jews and Christians—as third-class citizens under the past and present regime of *dhimmitude*. Nonetheless, the October 15 open letter is an appeal for conversation. The stature and credibility of the signers within the worlds of Islam is impressive and perhaps unprecedented. It is true that there is no direct reference to, never mind condemnation of, Jihadist aggressions such as September 11 and other attacks that have in recent years taken thousands of lives. Perhaps that would have been too dangerous, even for Muslims of such stature. It is not enough, however, to condemn "acts of wanton individual violence" in reaction to Regensburg. Yet such objections should not obscure the fact that the signers indicate their readiness to discuss with Christians the teachings of Islam and their significance, political and otherwise, for the current "clash of civilizations." It is, just possibly, a beginning.

■ Carl Esbeck, professor of law at the University of Missouri, has been doing invaluable work on church-state relations for years. In a recent article in the *Hofstra Law Review*, he takes to task Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who said in a recent opinion that the task of the Court is "to find a neutral course between the two Religion Clauses," which by their nature "tend to clash." The Court must explore where "there is room for play in the joints between the Clauses" and see if there is "space for legislative action neither compelled by the Free Exercise Clause nor prohibited by the Establishment Clause." Esbeck thinks this pitting of no-establishment against free exercise is utterly wrongheaded, and I warmly agree. He cites my long-standing argument—which I am glad to say is gaining some modest traction—that there are not two religion clauses but only one religion clause with two provisions, both of them being in the service of religious freedom. That there is only one clause, with two participial phrases modifying the object ("no law") of the verb ("shall make"), is grammatically indisputable. (The "two clauses" language is so entrenched in these discussions that it will continue to be used in the foreseeable future. Even in articles in these pages, we sometimes give it a pass.) In a footnote, however, Esbeck challenges the argument that "the first participial phrase is instrumental to the second participial phrase." "Rather," he writes, "each phrase is equal and operates independent of the other." I don't think so. I agree with the Esbeck who writes in his conclusion: "The Free Exercise Clause and the Establishment Clause do not conflict. Instead, they do different work, each in its own way protecting religious liberty and properly ordering church-state relations. When circumstances are such that their labors overlap, the Religion Clauses necessarily complement rather than conflict. Thus the Court's imagining these two negations on governmental power as frequently clashing—two bones grinding one upon the other at an arthritic joint that has lost its 'play'—is a dangerously misguided metaphor." Precisely. The no-establishment provision and the free-exercise provision are in the service of "protecting religious liberty and properly ordering church-state relations," which is to say they are in the service of free exercise. Originally, of course, the no-establishment provision simply assured the states that the new federal government

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would not interfere with their several establishments of religion. But, in the convoluted reasonings of the Supreme Court since *Everson* in 1947, no-establishment has frequently been employed to restrict free exercise, thus turning the religion clause of the First Amendment upside down. Despite *obiter dicta* such as those of Justice Ginsburg, there is reason to think that the Court may now be in the process of extricating itself from the confusions of its own creation. (For a more extended discussion of these questions, see my article "A New Order of Religious Freedom" in the February 1992 issue.)

■ John Henry Newman and G.K. Chesterton embodied two very different ways of being Christian. The differences, along with the similarities, are compared by Sheridan Gilley, a theologian at the University of Durham, in a recent issue of the *Chesterton Review*. "Newman was a natural ascetic," writes Gilley. "As a child he thought that he might be an angel, and the whole creation a trick played upon him by his fellow angels: this world was, for all its wonder, less real than a higher one. Nature was full of symbols which pointed its citizens to heaven, but in itself, it seemed unreal." And then this on Chesterton: "Chesterton by contrast was no monk. He was naturally tall, and he became enormous with it. He rejected the puritan streak in the fashionable life-style movements of his day, embodied in the non-smoking, no-alcohol vegetarianism of his old friend George Bernard Shaw, who shared these habits with that animal lover and impassioned modern believer in healthy living, Adolf Hitler. Instead, Chesterton began from a passionate mystical gratitude for the world of the senses as given by God: one could only wonder at the amazing facts that water was wet and the sky was blue, that silk was smooth and that steel was strong. Thus Chesterton argued that Catholicism justified innocent pleasure as God-given, in the hearty enjoyment of good wine and good food and good tobacco, and the associated cultures of public festival and dance and song, which were a part of the hospitality of the Olde English inn, and which had survived in the fiestas of the Mediterranean lands and their trinities of food, wine and prayer, which made the holiday a holy day, as the good God's gift through his creation. Catholic Christianity had created medieval Merrie England, and modern Italy and Spain. Even in this cold northern clime, the Catholic faith gave the gift to enjoy life. It was the divinely-sanctioned way of having fun."

■ I cannot resist, while I'm at it, Gilley's quotation of a magnificent Newman sentence that could never escape an editor's censure today but is finally more lucid and simple than most of what one reads in the newspaper. This is, of course, from the *Apologia*: "To consider the world in its length and breadth, its various history, the many races of man, their starts, their fortunes, their mutual alienation, their conflicts; and then their ways, habits, governments, forms of worship; their enterprises, their aimless courses, their random achievements and acquirements, the impotent conclusion of long-standing facts, the tokens so faint

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and broken of a superintending design, the blind evolution of what turn out to be great powers or truths, the progress of things, as if from unreasoning elements, not towards final causes, the greatness and littleness of man, his far-reaching aims, his short duration, the curtain hung over his futurity, the disappointments of life, the defeat of good, the success of evil, physical pain, mental anguish, the prevalence and intensity of sin, the pervading idolatries, the corruptions, the dreary hopeless irreligion, that condition of the whole race, so fearfully yet exactly described in the Apostle's words, 'having no hope and without God in the world,'—all this is a vision to dizzy and appall; and inflicts upon the mind the sense of a profound mystery, which is absolutely beyond human solution." The world in one sentence.

■ Each year in editorial meetings the question comes up as to what we should include in "the Christmas issue." But of course we do not really have a Christmas issue, since the December issue is in the mails mid-November. It is the January issue that arrives a little before Christmas, but that is, after all, the January issue. Nonetheless, in view of the lead time, Christmas is on my mind toward the end of October. And Christmas on my mind unfailingly recalls John Betjeman's "Christmas." You may remember how it begins:

The bells of waiting Advent ring,
The tortoise stove is lit again
And lamp-oil light across the night
Has caught the streaks of winter rain
In many a stained-glass window sheen
From Crimson Lake to Hooker's Green.

Then there are the verses beginning "And is it true?"

And is it true? And is it true,
This most tremendous tale of all,
Seen in a stained-glass window's hue,
A Baby in an ox's stall?
The Maker of the stars and sea
Become a Child on earth for me?

And the concluding verse:

No love that in a family dwells,
No carolling in frosty air,
Nor all the steeple-shaking bells
Can with this single Truth compare—
That God was Man in Palestine
And lives today in Bread and Wine.

With all the staff of FIRST THINGS, I pray the coming holy days will be filled with grace and glory for you and yours.

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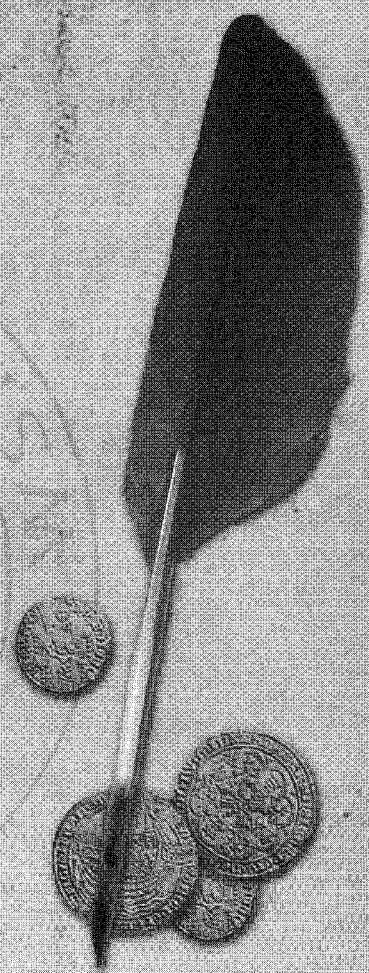

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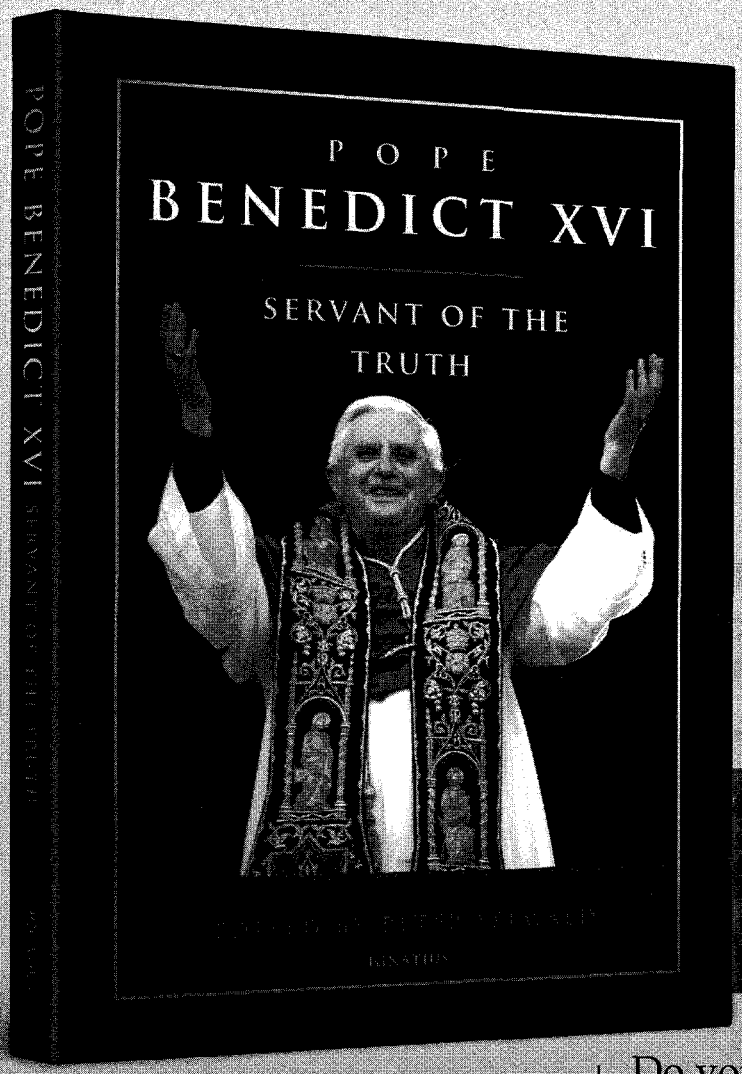

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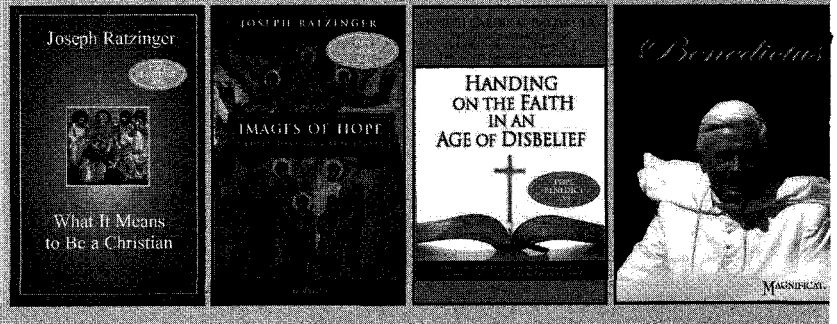
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